



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

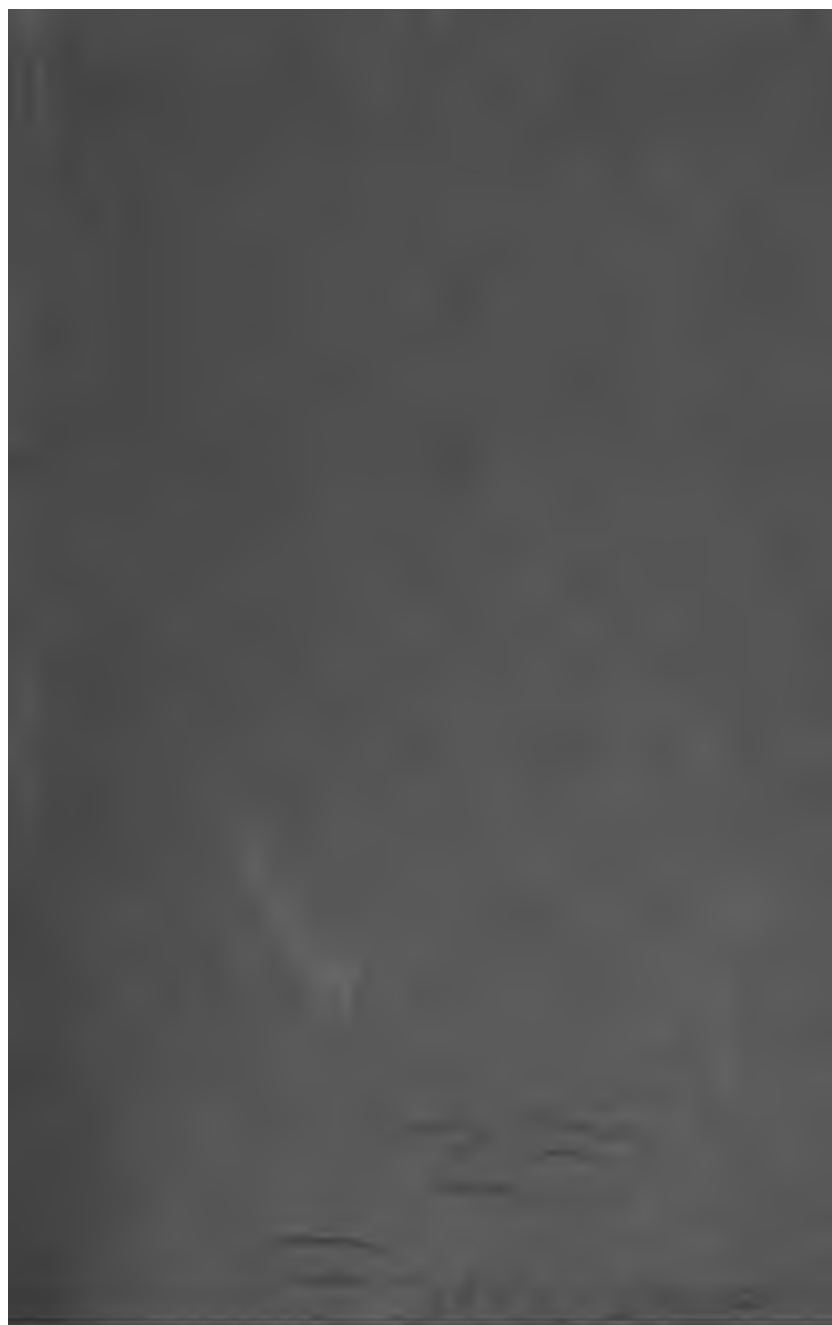


3 3433 06824138 3











121 201
22

ASPECTS OF SCEPTICISM.

*WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
PRESENT TIME.*

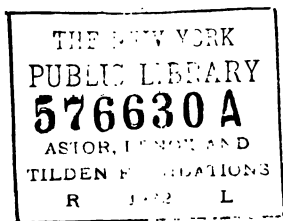
BY
JOHN FORDYCE, M.A.

OXFORD
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

LONDON :
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1883.

E.P.



NO. 100
DUE
1911

P R E F A C E.

THAT the following chapters are but fragments, no one can be more conscious than their author. He offers them to the public, nevertheless, hoping that they may be found helpful by those who are 'perplexed in faith,' but who do not feel able to study more elaborate and more exhaustive treatises. The writer has for years taken a deep interest in the 'conflict' with which he is here concerned, and has read whatever works came in his way. He has also endeavoured in different ways, by voice and by pen, by private conversations, by letters, and by public lectures, to guide those who were willing to accept his aid. The kindly interest taken in these well-meant efforts, both by seekers after light and by friends in whose judgment he had confidence, is his only apology for now seeking a larger audience. May the Master, who dealt so tenderly and so lovingly with His doubting disciple, and who is the 'same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,' graciously accept this humble attempt to lead doubters to Himself, and may He be pleased to forgive its unworthiness !

BELFAST, *June*, 1883.

S C E P T I C I S M.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

‘It is no secret that among the educated men of France and Italy, with the exception of a few individuals, the Christian dogma has ceased to hold any authoritative sway over either intellect or life.’—W. E. GLADSTONE.

‘An awful darkness, spite of optimist assertion to the contrary, is slowly settling upon the most interesting part of European society.’—EDWARD WHITE.

‘Never since the suppression of Pagan Philosophy was Christianity more attacked than now.’—PROFESSOR BAIN.

IN the following chapters the word Scepticism is used in its popular, rather than in its strictly technical sense. Properly speaking, as a recent writer suggests, the word denotes (1) ‘continuous search, (2) suspense, or so much of it as is needful as an incentive to search,’ but amongst both friends and foes of Christianity it is now used in a very different way. ‘No one,’ says Dr. Draper,¹ ‘acquainted with the mental condition of the intelligent classes in Europe and America, can doubt that there is a great and rapidly increasing departure from the public religious faith.’ He also reminds us that behind this open and formally avowed unbelief, there is a far more extensive, and far more dangerous, private and unacknowledged dissatisfaction

¹ ‘Conflict between Religion and Science.’

with religious beliefs. This 'departure,' whether open and avowed, or private and concealed, whether contained in anti-theistic theories and formal treatises, or in secretly cherished convictions, is what, in the following pages, is meant by Scepticism or Unbelief. In the use of such words to cover ideas often very widely unlike, there may be some danger of mixing 'things by speech which are divided by nature;' this danger we must seek to avoid by suitable discrimination and explanation, where these are necessary. There is a doubt which is 'devil born;' there is also a doubt which is with a view to faith, and through which we may reach a faith at once stronger and more intelligent—the outcome not of tradition, however true, but of a conscious experience of the power of truth to enlighten the understanding and purify the heart.

That there is in these days, among all classes of the community, a tendency to depart from the Christian faith, there can be no room for reasonable doubt; as to the character and extent of this departure, as to the causes and occasions thereof, there may be great diversity of opinion and judgment. The wits of Bishop Butler's day considered religion an exploded Superstition, and the sceptics to whom the Apologists of the past century addressed their arguments, probably believed that another hundred years would be sufficient to sweep away the last remnants of the Christian belief; and yet, no period in the history of Christianity has been more 'fruitful in good works' than the closing years of the eighteenth century. In the same way the unbelief of our age may over-rate its own importance, and the Christian thinker may mistake noisy and oft-repeated assertion for real strength of conviction; in this way, both opposers and defenders may undervalue the power of the truth about which they are contending. There is in every really active mind a tendency to exaggerate the importance of the questions with which it deals; specially is this tendency characteristic of the aggressive Scepticism of any age.

‘For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
 With, at every mile, run faster, O the wondrous, wondrous age !
 Little thinking if we work our *souls* as nobly as our iron,
 Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage !’¹

After making large deductions from the evidence adduced both by friends and foes of Christianity, after allowing for the natural disposition to exaggerate the importance of a period in which so many traditional opinions have been abandoned, and so many beliefs modified before the advancing tide of more correct knowledge, we are compelled to believe that there is a great, and apparently growing, amount of Scepticism amongst us in relation to the teachings of the Bible, and the more distinctive affirmations of the Christian Creed. Testimony to this effect comes from quarters so unlike, and from men who usually have so little in common, that its effect on any candid mind must be very powerful. True, this evidence has been challenged, and its force somewhat broken by counter-testimony. Dr. Rigg² declares, that at the present time the ‘relations of Christian faith to philosophy and science are better settled, and, at the same time, more satisfactory, than for some years past.’ His appeal is to the calm judgment of history, to the positive proofs and ‘fruitful energy’ of Christian faith, as proved by its works, to the ethical standards of our time, and to the actual state of our moral life. Such an appeal, supported by such evidence, demands and will receive the respectful attention of all Christian thinkers ; his estimate is in many respects both true and important, but, as he himself remarks, ‘false security would be a mistake.’ Mr. Joseph Cook tells us that, in Germany, the day of Rationalism is nearly over in the Universities, and that now students are everywhere flocking to professors who are loyal to the evangelical creed.³ Professor Calderwood thinks we shall by-and-by hear much less of

¹ Mrs. Browning.

² ‘Discourses and Addresses on Religion and Philosophy,’ by Rev. James H. Rigg, D.D.

³ Cook’s ‘Monday Lectures.’

'conflict' between science and religion, and that there has been on 'both sides needless planting of batteries and pouring forth of shot.'¹

All this may be true ; certainly it is not all the truth that Christian people in these days need to know and to lay to heart. After the conflict has ceased in the Universities, it must rage elsewhere : in the periodical press, even in the workshops, and among those who are far removed from the centres of intellectual life and thought, there may be much unbelief. Moreover, to those whose minds are but little familiar with the history of the past, and whose intellects have not been sharpened by the higher culture of the schools, the cessation of strife may often appear to be but the triumph of the sceptical view of life. It is certain that at the present time the acceptance, even provisionally, by Christian thinkers of the theories and hypotheses of scientific men, only adds to the difficulty of belief, and is an additional stumbling-block to the faith of many. All this may, and much of it certainly does, arise from misconception ; nevertheless, there is conflict, and some of the 'reconciliations' offered only add to the confusion.

Nor is this tendency to unbelief confined to any one country, or to any special class of men. It has spread all over Europe ; it has manifested itself in America ; it is not seen only among professors of the 'higher culture,' or among thinkers who have leisure and who are familiar with the thoughts of many ages—it may be found in the sick-room from which all sceptical literature has been excluded, in the workshop, where busy toilers are familiar with the more practical side of life ; even in the market-place, where eager men transact business, these doubts and questionings are not seldom heard.

Some years ago a gifted man, no longer amongst us, wrote a series of articles in one of our leading Reviews, under the title of 'Rocks Ahead, or the Warnings of Cassandra.' At that time England was prosperous, and her leading men were unwilling to believe that dark days were at hand. Hence Mr. Greg's

¹ Professor Calderwood's 'Science and Religion.'

warnings hardly received the attention to which they were entitled ; when trouble came, many confessed that Cassandra had spoken wisely, and, looking back, they saw that the nation had not been 'sailing free,' as some of her pilots believed. Mr. Greg's 'third rock' was the one with which we are now dealing—the alleged divorce between the highest intelligence and religion of the country. According to this keen observer, there is such a divorce not only in England, but all over Europe. In Germany, a very large portion of the intelligent classes has changed its ideas about the very nature of Christianity ; in Italy, men, and even women, scornfully reject the Gospel ; in France, there is a large amount of infidelity and religious indifference among all classes ; in Belgium, there is a wide-spread scepticism ; and in Holland, where the faith of Calvin once ruled so supremely, yea, even in Geneva, the very seat of the all-powerful Reformer, we have Rationalism in thought, and growing laxity in moral life. In our own country, Mr. Greg holds that the working-classes, or at least the more intelligent of them, are turning their backs on Christianity, and many of the leaders of thought have publicly avowed their hostility to the old faith.¹ No friend of the evangelical faith can afford to ignore such solemn warnings ; Mr. Greg is no timid believer, shrinking with alarm before the advance of the new order of things. His 'Creed of Christendom' must appear to evangelical Christians meagre and Rationalistic, and if he complains of the loss of faith, how much more must those who demand firmer foundations for their creed ! Professor Christlieb, of Bonn, whose work on 'Modern doubt and Christian belief' is so well known, fully confirms the estimate of 'Cassandra,' so far as Germany is concerned. And, strangely enough, Lange, himself a free-thinker, in his 'History of Materialism,' a work much lauded by the free-thinkers of England, seems to be afraid of the progress of that very theory of life whose triumphs he chronicles ; Lange heralds the dawn of a new era, but in

¹ See *Contemporary Review* for May, June, and August, 1874.

order to make its ideals morally safe, he stipulates for a strong admixture of the older faith !

Professor Bain, of Aberdeen, himself a leader of philosophical Scepticism, declares that since the suppression of the Pagan Philosophy, Christianity has never been more attacked than now, and he pretty broadly hints that these modern attacks are not calling forth anything like the ancient Christian vindication. Professor Flint is very familiar with anti-theistic theories, familiar also with the best thought of Europe, present and past, is neither an alarmist nor a gloomy pessimist, yet he tells us that 'no man who examines the signs of the times can fail to see much tending to show that Atheism may possibly come to have its day of fatal supremacy. What chiefly threatens us is Atheism in the form of Agnosticism, Positivism, Secularism, Materialism, etc., and it does so directly and seriously. The most influential authorities in Science and Philosophy, and a host of the most popular representatives of literature, are strenuously propagating it. It has, in our large centres of population, missionaries, who, I fear, are better qualified for their work than many of those whom our Churches send forth to advocate to the same classes the cause of Christianity.'¹

We might appeal to other leading thinkers—men who have recently given their estimate of the state of this question. Bishop Ellicott, in an Episcopal charge, in his 'Introduction to the New Testament Commentary,' still more recently in his introduction to the 'Old Testament Commentary;' Mr. Row in his very able Bampton Lecture; Professor Wace in his Boyle and Bampton Lectures; Dr. Conder in his 'Basis of Faith,' a work now within the reach of all, and one full of helpful suggestion; Canon Farrar in his recent writings; Mr. Edward White in his 'Life of Christ,' and a host of writers, all take the same view.

Reference may also be made to Mr. Holt Hutton, who, from his connection with the press,² is well acquainted with the

¹ Dr. Flint's 'Anti-Theistic Theories,' p. 37. See also the articles by Mr. Gladstone in *Contemporary Review*, June, 1876.

² Editor of *Spectator*.

streams and tendencies of modern thought ; speaking, in the preface to the last edition of his 'Theological and Literary Essays,' of the growth of Scepticism among the leaders of thought, he declares that, so far as there have been changes in the 'temper of English thought' in recent times, they have been in the '*direction of shaking men's faith in the deepest assumptions both of the Theistic and Christian Creed.*' Lest anyone should reply that, even since Mr. Hutton's essays were published, vast changes have taken place in an opposite direction, we may suggest a perusal of such works as Cheyne's 'Isaiah,' Professor Robertson Smith's 'Lectures on the Old Testament,' and Dr. Wright's 'Donellan Lecture,' etc. ; or take the following from Principal Fairbairn's recent work, the 'City of God.' 'The conflict of Faith in our day is most arduous and fell. It lies surrounded by real or potential enemies. Science cannot publish her discoveries without letting us hear the shock of their collision with the ancient Faith. The political philosopher seeks to show how the State can live and prosper without religion ; the ethical thinker, how right can exist and law govern without God. A philosophy that denies the surest and most necessary religious truths, works in harmony with a criticism that resolves into mythologies the holiest religious histories. A large section of our literature, including some of the finest creations of living imagination, interpret Nature and man, exhibit life and destiny, from the standpoint of those who have consciously renounced belief in God, and can find on earth nothing Divine but humanity. Our working men listen to theories of life that leave around them only blank material walls, within them no spiritual reality, before them no higher and larger hope.'¹

There are other indications pointing in the same direction, and which, so far as they can be trusted, confirm the accuracy of these and such-like testimonies. For many years complaints have been made by religious men of the alarming extent to which public worship is being neglected. Recent statistics in

¹ 'The City of God : a Series of Discussions on Religion,' by A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.

various parts of the kingdom show that these complaints have been only too well founded. Not only are there large numbers of people that habitually neglect public worship, not only is there among the working classes, so-called, wide-spread neglect, (not specially confined to these, be it remembered, for, being the largest class in the community, they must necessarily furnish the largest per-centage of non-church-goers), but it would appear that in many places the proportion of church-goers to the population is not so great as in 1851! Hence, when optimists point us to the thousands of pounds annually spent on church-buildings, and to the great activity among all Christian workers, as a proof that Scepticism is not on the increase, we can only reply that there are more and grander buildings for worship than at any former period of our history, but that these costly temples are often not half-filled, and outside all Churches we find the largest part of the population. It would be very unwise to make non-church-going the test of Scepticism in the community; rough and ready methods like these deceive those who make them, irritate outsiders, and, moreover, they are essentially false. Many of those who attend public worship are greater Sceptics than some who stay away; yea, under the cloak of even zeal for orthodoxy, we may find not a little genuine unbelief. At the same time it is but fair to see in the non-church-goers of all ranks, *materials out of which Sceptics are readily manufactured*. Religious indifference, as well as the study of Sceptical literature, tends to unbelief; those familiar with non-church-goers are well aware, too, that many of these are Sceptical. They are not to any great extent Atheistic—the genuine Atheists are ever few. They may not hold any decided or dogmatic form of unbelief; they may, and generally do, believe in an overruling Providence, often also in a future state, and in human freedom, but they do not accept, even passively, many of the most distinctive teachings of the Evangelical Creed.

One of the burning political questions of the time is whether an Atheist is to be permitted to enter Parliament or not; into

this subject we do not here enter. Whether the Christian faith is really helped by so-called religious tests, whether National Religion can be helped by certain clauses in oaths of allegiance, are matters about which we have decided opinions, but they are not relevant to the question now under discussion : what seems to us, from our point of view, the point of deepest interest is, *that there are to be found constituencies willing to be represented in Parliament by men openly avowing themselves Atheists.* Not that we believe any considerable numbers of our people are really Atheistic ; elections are determined by many side issues, and no man has yet appealed to electors on the simple ground that he is an Atheist. But that constituencies should be willing to overlook such considerations, because of their general sympathy with the political creed of any candidate, should be willing to have laws made for them by men who have no faith in God, in immortality, or in human freedom, indicates an immense change in the thought and feeling of our people. This aspect of the 'Oaths Question' has not received from Christians the attention it deserves. Other aspects of the controversy have only a temporary and very secondary importance. That party leaders should be eager to make political capital out of the difficulties of opponents is natural enough, but the deeper questions and issues involved cannot be decided by majorities in the House of Commons.

We have to face the fact that vast masses of our people are utterly indifferent to the faith of the men who made this country what it is, and that these multitudes are directly and immediately exposed to the influences that make for unbelief, rather than faith in the Unseen and Eternal. Time was when doubts about revealed religion were discussed only by scholars, and when attacks on Christianity appeared in what was practically an unknown tongue. In our age, everything, whether the music of the grand old masters, or the latest theories of some Darwinian speculator, must be popularized.

Strauss addressed his first 'Life of Jesus' to the theologians of Europe ; for them it was written, by them only could it be

appreciated. In the closing years of his life he issued a 'Life of Jesus' for the German people, one intended to be read in the cottage and discussed in the workshops of the Fatherland. This is a simple illustration of the change that has taken place in modern life, and *the influence of such changes on the growth of Scepticism must be manifest to all.* Leading thinkers who wish to leaven the mind of Europe by their Agnostic theories appeal now to the people. Reviews, magazines, periodicals, and newspapers, sow the seeds of unbelief broadcast over the land. Novelists and poets assist in this work. We have a 'religion of humanity,' which makes use of old phrases, and appeals to old instincts, and by which many are deceived. After the death of 'George Eliot,' for instance, letters and articles appeared in the public press, attempting to demonstrate that the thought of this gifted thinker was essentially Christian, and the immortality she proclaimed that of the New Testament. One leading organ of public opinion took comfort from the alleged fact that 'George Eliot' had never spoken against the teachings of the Church of England! It need hardly be said that such writers are thankful for small mercies. The immortality brought to light by this writer is the influence exerted upon the lives of others; the 'immortal dead' are to 'live again in minds made better by their presence;' is it necessary to say that this is not the 'life to come' taught by Christ and His Apostles? We do not undervalue the spiritual influence of the deeds that live after us—we may at times feel ambitious to be remembered by what we have said and done; alas! those to whom life is most real, are too conscious of frailty, imperfection, and sin, not to see that expectations from this quarter are of doubtful value. They desire an immortality of another kind altogether, and hence they find the 'Gospel of the Resurrection' the only good news for them. We mention this simply as an instance of how gifted writers have helped, perhaps without meaning it, to swell the tide of Sceptical thought, and to suggest doubts to humble seekers after light. Poetry, too, has been enlisted in the service of Scepticism, and has at times hindered

the faith of the people. Too often, instead of fighting their doubts, and so gathering strength for the battle of life, instead of wrestling with their spiritual foes in the solitude of their own heart and life, poets have set their dark problems to music, and have sung in captivating strains the praises of doubt and mental unrest. And these utterances of theirs—themselves the product of a time-spirit anything but trustful, have fallen on sympathetic ears, and have been welcomed as a veritable gospel by many unbelieving hearts. Many have considered unbelief more manly, and more expressive of intellectual freedom, than faith, forgetful of the fact that man grows, intellectually and spiritually, not by negation, but by a spirit of hope, and trust, and love.

The results of this ferment of opinion have been most disastrous to many, specially to younger inquirers and thinkers. They have been diverted from the true path, both of intellectual and moral progress, by these tendencies and influences, and have often lost their way amid the mazes of conflicting opinion and daring conjecture. Goethe, himself, we fear, not always on the side of faith, reminds us that only epochs of faith are epochs of fruitfulness. This is true of the intellectual no less than the moral life ; it is pre-eminently true of man's spiritual progress. Doubt, suspense, and anxious inquiry are necessary ; we may even affirm with one that the man who never doubted never really believed ; we may assert with Dr. Fairbairn that it is not 'always the men that love truth best that find her most easily.' No less is it true that faith is essential to a healthy moral life, and the tendency of much of the literature of our time is to doubts and questionings. In very much of it there is no faith, and therefore we cannot expect it either to help unbelief or create trust ; not that our best writers have given themselves up to Scepticism, but there are writings where faith, even in the human, seems to have died out, and where everything that men ought to revere—God, conscience, womanhood, manhood—is treated with but slightly veiled contempt. Pressensè, in his 'Early Years of Chris-

tianity,' suggests that 'there is one thing more deplorable than believing in error, and that is to believe in nothing ; this is the essential error, the fundamental aberration of the soul, the invincible obstacle to truth.' We have not yet reached this stage in the progress of our Scepticism, but it is to be feared that many are on the way to it, and that with the loss of any hold on the great verities of the Christian Creed, they are in danger of losing hold of the natural pieties of the human heart. Those familiar with city-life, tell us that the numbers both of men and women who have reached this stage are much larger than many think.

In the following pages, we address another, and a very different, class of people ; not those who have been fully drawn into the vortex of blank and hopeless unbelief in all that is Divine and Sacred, but a far wider circle, still hovering round the central faiths of their earlier days. They have not all broken with Christianity—they simply doubt many things they once believed, and they hesitate where before they accepted with unquestioning faith. The criticism, the discussions and conflicts, and still more that out of which these have arisen—the spirit of the age and the tendencies of the time—have affected much their relation to the Bible and its view of life. They may not actually accept, may not even pretend to understand, the new theories of life propounded by distinguished teachers. But they have an uneasy kind of feeling that there are other views of life than those they were taught to accept ; they know that these new theories are put forward by able men, not as a cloak for laxity of moral life, but as an intellectual solution of the problems with which all are confronted. Far more than many are willing to allow, such thoughts and feelings are in the minds of large classes of men. The quiet Sunday-school teacher, who is known only as a consistent Christian worker, the regular attendant at the Bible-class, the young man who seldom is absent from the house of God, as well as the more self-assertive and so-called free-thinkers, who attend Secularist gatherings and listen to lectures in 'Halls of

Science,' may have but little in common, so far as belief goes, with those who accept fully and heartily the Christian Creed.

To men with such doubts and suspicions, the Bible is no longer the same book, and Bible-study is not what it used to be. The most distinctive teachings of the Holy Record appear before the eye as if marked by notes of interrogation. Prayer is impossible, for what if God does not hear prayer? What if the very conception of a 'prayer-hearing God,' be but a survival from an age of credulity? How can we pray to a Being whose existence is so out of relation to our lives? The only acceptable prayer must be humble submission to the order of events, and an earnest desire to become more fully acquainted with the world in which we live, move, and have our being.

Need we suggest that all who are in anything like this state of mind, are exposed to peculiar dangers, both intellectual and moral? Our 'advanced thinkers' are fond of speaking of the paralyzing influence upon the soul of the religious creed of our forefathers. They look down, with feelings more akin to contempt than pity, upon 'the early heaven and happy views' of many of their brothers and sisters; we would not venture to say that this early heaven and these happy views of life have been all they might have been. There may be not a little sheer credulity in what passes for simple faith; there may be beliefs no longer tenable by intelligent minds, and that have been abandoned by all who know anything of science. Is there not equal danger on the other side, a danger hinted at by the poet, when he forbids the confusing of a 'life that leads melodious days'?¹ Many who have appeared, in their own eyes, to have reached the pure air of a higher intellectual and spiritual life, have yet failed in this world of sin; nor can we doubt that the origin of their moral failures is to be sought, in what they have considered their freedom of thought in relation to Divine Revelation.

Even where this Sceptical attitude does not lead to moral failure, there may be exerted on the whole mental and moral

¹ *In Memoriam*, xxxiii.

life a withering and blighting influence. The heroes of the past, the men who have subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness, have all been men of faith; their faith may not have been as pure as it might have been had their knowledge been wider, their religious creeds may have contained propositions that are no longer accepted (not because of such creeds, but in spite of them did they accomplish great things), but they were strong because of their heroic faith in God and in His moral government. 'The man,' says Professor Blackie, 'who will succeed must seek, and he must see, and he must strike, and above all things he must believe. Nature does nothing for doubters.'¹

Ages of Scepticism have never been fruitful in heroic deeds. The great Puritan leaders who made our country, the men who in the House of Commons resisted the tyranny of kings, who in the fires of persecution defied and resisted priesthoods, the men who could die, but could not be slaves—these were all men of faith. We may sneer at their strange coats and hats, we may be amused at their nasal speech, we may easily find flaws in their argument, and even convict them of disloyalty to New Testament ideals; one thing all earnest minds must ever admire and reverence—their strong faith in God, and their determination to obey His will under all circumstances and at all costs.

Now, the very children of the Puritans doubt whether God has spoken to man, and whether the record of His revelation is any longer profitable for discipline in righteousness! Need we wonder that, under such conditions, churches are half empty, and Christian work much neglected? that glaring abuses remain in our social life, and that political life is often so corrupt and degrading in its influence? To live pure lives, to do grand and noble deeds, is possible only to men of faith; where the attitude towards the Founder of Christianity even, and His most distinctive teachings, is one of Sceptical indiffer-

¹ *Lay Sermons*, p. 125.

ence, purity of life is most difficult, and the highest type of moral character impossible.

Is there a more excellent way? Must the inquirer always carry the burden of doubt and fear and unrest in his breast? Certainly not! He may not be able to answer all the arguments of the Sceptic, nor may he be competent even to understand some of the theories that are offered to us in place of the religion of our fathers. He may feel overwhelmed, as his eye rests on the lists of authors given in foot-notes by writers who try to persuade him that 'supernatural religion' is a thing of the past; he may be amazed at the erudition, the ingenuity, the fertility of resource, displayed by opponents of revelation, and yet he may refuse to follow in their path, or to allow his moral fibre to be weakened by feeding on the husks they offer to him as food for the soul.

Tennyson reminds us of one who,—

'Fought his doubts, and gathered strength,—
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind,
And laid them : thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own.'

It is the privilege of everyone to accomplish this sublime task; we may not have the learning necessary, the mental grasp essential, to a perfect mastery of the position of modern Scepticism, but the humblest of us may think out the problems of faith, and thus get knowledge and certainty at first hand. The Spirit of truth is promised to every honest mind, and under this influence alone can we ever hope to reach a true or abiding faith in the presence and power of the Unseen World. Some difficulties may be removed by argument, others only by wider and deeper knowledge; some doubts are the result of misconception, and others the fruit of imperfect acquaintance with the facts of life. There is a way of stating and illustrating the history of the progress of science, which makes it appear that before its triumphal march the ideas, conceptions, and beliefs taught by the Bible must ever of necessity retreat;

there is another, and, we believe, a truer account to be given, one which, while it may not solve all problems, and relieve the mind of all difficulties, yet makes us hopeful as to the result of deeper study alike of science and Christianity.

Whether we may, or may not, be able to dispose satisfactorily of the arguments, theories, and prepossessions that make faith so difficult to many, let us hold firmly that faith, a truly rational faith, is possible to all honest minds! We read in the Gospels of one who was born blind, and who received his sight by the healing touch of Jesus Christ; he was certainly no match in argument for the learned Doctors and Sceptical Pharisees who plied him with their relentless logic; he was not expert in theological questions as to the relation of sin to works of healing, but one thing he knew for certain, was as sure of this as of his own existence: *once he had been blind, now he saw*. It is, we believe, the privilege of every seeking soul, no matter how perplexed in faith by current theories and influential Scepticisms, to come face to face with truth, as revealed in the Record of God's Revelation, and to know, at first hand, all that man most needs to learn. 'A true revelation of God,' says a deep thinker, 'must be its own witness;' and those who would attain real certainty must come into living personal contact with the Great Revealer. This is at once the simplest, the most direct, and at the same time most spiritual, of all methods of knowledge. The soul that thus *knows for itself*, will be able to say with a distinguished scholar and critic: 'Of this I am sure at the outset (*i. e.*, of all inquiries), that the Bible does speak to the heart of man in words that can only come from God—that no historical research can deprive me of this conviction, or make less precious the divine utterances that speak straight to the heart.' If, as the result of personal contact with the truth, not mere study of 'evidences,' we have this direct and well-grounded certainty, we shall be able to say with the same writer, though ignorant of criticism, whether 'newer' or 'older': 'So it is with the Bible. The supreme truths which speak to every believing heart, the way of salvation, which is the same in all ages, the clear voice

of God's love, so tender and personal and simple that a child can understand it—these are the things that must abide with us, and prove themselves mighty from age to age apart from all (may we not also say in spite of all?) scientific study. But those who love the truth will not shrink from any toil that can help us to a fuller insight into all its details and all its setting; and those whose faith is firmly fixed on the things that cannot be moved, will not doubt that every new progress in Biblical study (or any other study) must in the end make God's great scheme of grace appear in fuller beauty and glory.¹

From this standpoint of faith the following pages are written. The writer is deeply conscious of his inability to deal with many of the critical questions raised in connection with modern unbelief; many of these must be left to experts, just as are other questions in science, nor need we fear the results of thorough examination by competent critics. He is, however, conscious of a strong desire to help those who are 'perplexed in faith,' and who are seeking paths that lead towards the light of life. It is not necessary, in order to help an honest inquirer, that we should answer all arguments, or discuss all theories. The evidences, so-called, for the truth of Christianity, are far too numerous and far too varied to be dealt with in a few chapters; nor are there wanting, for those who have leisure and ability to study them, many works written by able and earnest defenders of the faith. A far humbler task the present writer has ventured to set before himself. If he can suggest thoughts, or new lines of thought, to honest inquirers; if he is able to show that, in relation to many opinions said to be false, and many truths now attacked, there is not a little to be said on the other side; if he is able to point to this mistake and that misconception, to this error and that misrepresentation, he may break the force of many a sceptical argument, and help the honest seeker to find more and clearer light.

Much depends in all such inquiries on the attitude of mind

¹ 'The Old Testament in the Jewish Church,' by Professor Robertson Smith, p. 29.

with which we approach the subject. Much of what we call Modern Scepticism consists more of a tone and temper of mind, in relation to Divine truth, than of any definite unbelieving theory of life ; if by any word of ours the inquirer is led to a more excellent way, to adopt a more reverent and therefore more childlike attitude in relation to truth, if we are able to convince any that the faith of Prophets, Apostles, and martyrs, the faith of the saintly and the strong of past ages, is the only faith that can make strong men and women in this nineteenth century, we shall not have laboured altogether in vain.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORICAL OUTLINES AND CONTRASTS.

‘I am the Spirit that evermore denies,
And rightly so—for all that doth arise
Deserves to perish—this, distinctly seeing—
No ! say I, No ! to everything that tries
To bubble into being.’

Mephistopheles in Faust.

‘At the present moment, indeed, belief in the revelation of the Unseen is undergoing, here as elsewhere, a shock, which is without a parallel in the history of this country, for the activity of its manifestations.’—W. E. GLADSTONE.

‘All epochs wherein Belief prevails, are splendid, heart-elevating, *fruitful* for contemporaries and posterity. All epochs, on the contrary, wherein Unbelief maintains its sorry victory, should they even for a moment glitter with a sham splendour, vanish from the eyes of posterity ; because no one chooses to burden himself with study of the *unfruitful*.’—GOETHE.

ACCORDING to some writers and speakers there is nothing new in the unbelief of our age. The objections raised by Sceptics have been all answered long ago. The Materialists of to-day are but the ancient Epicureans, with a new name, and speaking in the accents of our own language. The most advanced critics add nothing to the arguments anticipated by Celsus and others, and more than answered by Origen and the other Apologists. That there are grains of truth in such a view of unbelief we do not deny. The scientists of our time take great pains to show that many of their arguments and suggestions were in part anticipated by Lucretius and his school ; they even give us elaborate expositions of the materialistic theories of

Greek philosophers. But such expositors would hardly like to confess that they have nothing new to give to the world, and while they delight to see hints thrown out by early investigators, they do not admit that this age has nothing distinctively its own to offer.

Both attack and defence appeal to what is ancient, and with equal reason, for the beliefs and unbeliefs of the present must, in harmony with the law of continuity, find many of their roots in the distant past.

No good end is served by such attempts to shut the mouth of the Sceptic ; truth is not the property of any particular age, but truth and error alike must appear in the dress most attractive to those whom they seek to win. We cannot understand the thought of an age unless we know something of what has gone before, and this principle must be fully applied to the unbelieving thought of our time. The more we study this subject, the more shall we be convinced that, whilst there are many points of agreement between the unbelief of one age and the unbelief of another, there are fundamental and radical differences ; these differences must be taken into account by any one who would do justice to either Sceptics or Scepticism.

Our concern is, of course, with the unbelief of the nineteenth century, but we may be helped in our effort to understand this phenomenon by a brief, and necessarily imperfect, survey of the Scepticism of other and earlier periods.

For our purpose, little can be gained by going back farther than the early years of Christianity ; not that there was no Scepticism before this date, but that we are not likely to gain much by such investigations. The sceptical attitude of mind, much more than the jesting one, is well represented in Pilate's question, ' What is truth ? ' and we may be sure that unbelief found much support among men of Pilate's class in the Roman world, before the time of Christ. The very existence and influence of a sect like that of the Sadducees, within the Jewish community, is a proof that unbelieving tendencies were at work among the ' People of the Book.'

Some critics have even attempted to trace the various stages in the history of Scepticism, as that appears in connection with Old Testament thought. We cannot here discuss this question fully, and a partial treatment of it would be misleading. Nothing but confusion can arise from an identification of certain phases of doubt met with in Old Testament literature with many of the unbelieving 'isms' of our time. Doubtless there were 'fools' in the days of the Psalmists who denied the existence of God ; but the 'fools' were wicked men, and their denial practical rather than speculative. Of Atheism, in the modern sense, there is, so far as we know, no trace. Men who desired to escape from the practical restraints of religion might wish there were 'no God' to call them to account, or to punish them for their evil deeds ; men might then, as many do now, live as if they had no faith in God, and no reverence for His law, such a life being quite possible along with a strong assent to a Theistic creed, and an intense horror of speculative Atheism, but we find nothing corresponding to the Scepticism of our age in the sacred books. A brilliant Semitic scholar¹ reminds us, that if we scratch Job's skin we shall find under it a modern Pessimist ; perhaps there is truth in such a view, for there is a deep unity in all human feeling ; but how unlike Job's Scepticism is so much of what we see and know ! Job's theological creed was too narrow to cover the facts of his sad experience. His friends, under the influence of his theology, and without the restraints imposed by his experience of its insufficiency, attempted to comfort him by denying the truth of his deepest convictions ; hence the bewilderment and perplexity of the good man. He never, for a moment, doubted the existence, and but for a moment did he doubt the goodness of God. In the same way both Prophets and Psalmists give free and frank utterance to their doubts, difficulties, and fears. But to doubt like theirs, we may well apply the often misapplied words of the poet. There lived far more real faith in the worst doubts of these men, than in much of the high-sounding faith

¹ Dr. A. B. Davidson in the 'Ency. Britt.,' article 'Job.'

of our age, not to say its loud-tongued unbelief.¹ Their souls thirsted for God, and His presence in their life was the grandest and most certain fact in their experience. Their Theism differed from ours in many respects. We can hardly conceive that any power dwells in a Theism which should either deny or be ignorant of immortality; they knew little about the future life, they believed in it, indeed, after a fashion, hoped for it, and at times felt its power, but their one and all-embracing belief was in God. They realized, at times most vividly, the presence of God in heart and life, and they were willing to trust their future and the world's future to the living God, content to be bound up with Him in the 'bundle of life.'

It were alike uncritical, and unjust, to confound the Scepticism of such men with the unbelief of an age like ours. More plausibly might we compare some of the '*Preacher's*' utterances with the negations of our contemporaries;² even here there are differences too radical to make comparisons anything but misleading, and therefore we come to the oppositions of later times.

When we study the history of Christianity from this standpoint, we find in the early years of its growth and progress not a little of what may be termed Scepticism. The first opponents of the Christians were Jews, but with this earliest form of opposition we need not deal. Christianity, after all, is the flower and fruit of the older Dispensation. Every page of the New Testament is full of the thought of the Old, and many fundamental beliefs were common to persecutors and persecuted.

¹ Speaking of Job's experiences, Professor T. Lewis remarks: 'Our highest Rationalism has no such remembrance and no such mourning. It may talk of the dimness of Job's views, the inadequate conceptions entertained by the author of the poem in respect to the character of God, or the absence of any clear mention of a future life; but his darkness is better than their light, his intense Theistic feeling stronger than their theory; they have no such Scepticism, perhaps, because they have no such faith.'—'*Theism of the Book of Job*,' Lange's Commentary.

² See Dissertations and Notes by Professor Tayler Lewis in Lange's '*Ecclesiastes*.'

Pagan philosophers and rulers saw in the early Christians only a new sect of the Jews, and thus the conflict manifested all the features of a civil war. We must therefore start with Pagan unbelief and opposition to Christianity, and find in these the fore-gleams of nineteenth century Scepticism.

A recent writer, dealing with this theme, reminds us that in three ways the unbelievers of the first centuries differ from the Sceptics of our day. To-day the conflict is based on reason ; both parties appeal to argument, to what may be termed moral forces. In the first ages the 'deniers of Christianity were on the defensive, and were defending a publicly held and settled religion, among other means, by force.'¹ Argument was partially used, it is true, but the chief appeal was to force, or what may be identified therewith. The Jews stoned Christ as a blasphemer, and used all the force at their disposal to put down His teaching ; the Pagans followed too eagerly this evil example, and attempted to suppress by violence the new religion of peace and charity. Sceptics often remind us that these are *Christian modes of warfare* ; history tells a truer tale, and points a higher moral. Christians, alas ! have persecuted, have used the sword in order to establish a reign of peace and love ; the first believers knew better, and were more loyal to the Spirit of their Master. Their first works of evidence, their apologies for the truth, were their heroic faith, their saintly lives, and the sweet patience under suffering and injustice which had been taught them by the Cross of Christ. 'That handful of men,' says Pressensè, 'who believed eighteen centuries ago in the Gospel miracles, were not brought, it is true, before official examiners, but they went down with calm conviction in presence of a furious populace into the arena, and sealed with their blood their faith in a risen Lord. Evidence thus attested ceases to be contemptible and deserves to be examined.'²

This, then, is the *first* contrast between the unbelief of our time and that of the first age. Scepticism does not now appeal

¹ 'Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century,' by Professor Cairns, D.D.

² 'Jesus Christ : His Times, Life and Work,' by E. de Pressensè, D.D.

to force—it seeks by argument, by appeal to fact and history, as misinterpreted by itself, to gain adherents. Not that unbelief might refuse to persecute again, if it were strongly tempted. Science, and the purely scientific impulse, can be very cold and very cruel, and can entirely ignore the moral and even humane aspect of things, when it gets its way. Those who are familiar with the ‘State regulation of vice,’ in modern times, will understand what we mean. The pursuit of knowledge, and the protection of the physical part of our humanity, may be so dwelt upon, that deeper, holier, and more human interests are easily sacrificed—all, too, in the interests of science.¹

Force, then, and not argument, was the first weapon of unbelief. The philosophers and great men of the first centuries seemed to have utterly ignored the presence and progress of Christianity.² Hence the attack was left to men of a different type, and they fought with such weapons as they knew and understood.

Another contrast is this : the early deniers of Christianity ‘made common cause with Polytheism, and thus admitted the principle of a Divine revelation, as well as the legitimacy of all its supernatural evidence.’³ Men who themselves believed in ‘Gods many and Lords many,’ could hardly find fault with Christians for believing in one God. When amongst themselves there was so much dissatisfaction with Polytheism, that Paul found at Athens an altar to the ‘Unknown God,’ they could not well ridicule this sublimer aspect of what was the common faith. Later on in the struggle, indeed, this faith in the supernatural was ridiculed and denied, but this only shows how the great depths of heathen life were being broken up, and

¹ The history of the ‘Laws Regulating Vice,’ and the discussions of vivisection in Parliament and elsewhere furnish ample justification for the above remark. Our forefathers were blind as bats about slavery ; we are, with far less excuse, blind to the higher light in relation to this painful subject. Christians even forbid discussion, *in the interests of purity* !

² See Lecky’s ‘History of European Morals,’ chap. iii.

³ Cairns.

that men were ceasing to believe in the good—whether human or Divine.

Once more : 'the deniers of Christianity in the early ages granted, with hardly an exception, the genuineness and integrity of the Christian documents ;' this makes a most emphatic and most suggestive contrast. The modern Apologist can point to the fact that the first Sceptics actually appealed to the sacred books as if genuine. As Dr. Cairns well says, 'It is impossible for modern unbelief to shake this foundation, or to resolve those materials which Celsus has attested as so solid and documentary into the mist and vapour of shifting tradition.' The bearing of a fact like this upon modern controversies as to the age of certain books, and as to the growth of what are called 'myths,' will readily be seen.

These and other contrasts, upon which it is not necessary to dwell, show that the unbelief of the early ages had a character of its own, and that the Scepticism amid which we live, move, and have our being, must not be held to be merely its distant echo. Of course, the spirit animating both may be largely the same, but the point of view is different, and the weapons used are very different ; these contrasts must be carefully considered by all who would really understand either the one period or the other.

Those who wish to study this period more fully may find materials within easy reach of them that will enable them to form a sound judgment. That victory, along the whole line of attack, was with Christianity can hardly be questioned. The words of the dying Julian may fairly be applied here : 'Oh, Galilean, Thou hast conquered !' Lecky and Renan are very differently constituted men, and their respective attitudes towards Christianity, though Sceptical, are unlike ; yet both wax warm as they tell the story of the suffering patience and saintly fortitude of the martyrs and confessors, who conducted this defence. Speaking of the attack by Nero, Renan says : 'Next to the day on which Jesus died on Golgotha, the day of the festival in the gardens of Nero—we may fix it as the 1st of August, 64

—was the most solemn in the history of Christianity. The solidity of a construction is in proportion to the sum of virtue, of sacrifice, of self-devotion, which has been built into its foundations. Only fanatics can found anything ; Judaism still exists because of the intense ardour of its prophets and zealots ; Christianity because of the courage of its first witnesses. . . . The orgy of Nero . . . was the taking possession of the Vatican Hill by a triumphant army of a kind the world had not yet known.¹

Not only by heroic and self-sacrificing deeds, but quite as much by clear, strong, and convincing arguments, did Christianity conquer. As Canon Farrar reminds us, dying Paganism was no match intellectually, even with all its high culture and its haughty pride, for young Christianity. Clemens and Origen more than refuted the 'calumnies of their opponents ; better than this, for each refuted error they offered a beautiful convincing truth ; and recognizing the Divine spark which glimmered even in the white embers of heathen wisdom, they summoned their adversaries to drink with them of the living water, and share with them the eternal light.'²

Pressensè has made a special study of this subject for many years, has made himself familiar with attack and defence, has told us the story of the sufferings and the faith of martyrs, confessors, and heroes, in eloquent and sympathetic words—has also given us valuable analyses of both arguments against and arguments for Christianity ; he is therefore entitled to a hearing when he gives his opinion on the merits of this controversy. According to him, 'it is a capital error to suppose that to renounce the vain pride of reason is to renounce intellectual superiority ; the apology of the fathers gives striking evidence to the contrary. . . . They did not make their sufferings a shield against all attacks, nor did they consider that the honourable wounds of the persecuted Church were an adequate refutation of her assailants. The representatives of the new religion did

¹ Renan's 'Hibbert Lecture,' p. 89.

² Farrar's 'Hulsean Lecture' for 1870.

not allow a single accusation, a single objection, to fall to the ground ; they overcame Pagan philosophy with its own weapons. The intellectual superiority of Christianity is no less marked than the high tone of its morals. . . . Though Christianity had for its first witnesses fishermen from the Lake of Galilee, it was, nevertheless, itself the grandest of all philosophies ; and as soon as the Church had leisure to add to its faith the advantages of high culture, as soon as it found itself constrained by the tactics of its assailants to plead its cause before the bar of science, its defenders took their place at the head of the intellectual movement of their day.¹

It is not necessary to dwell on the period between the destruction of Paganism and the age of the Reformation in Europe. Not that there was no Scepticism in those dark ages, so-called ; there may be a great deal of unbelief even where there is little open and avowed antagonism to the creed of the Church. Had unbelief assumed dangerous dimensions, or manifested itself with boldness during this period, it would have been attacked by very different weapons from those used by Christians in the earlier days of Christianity. The Church, alas ! forgot her early faith, forgot also the direct teachings of her Divine Lord, and, misled by false ideals, grasped the sword instead of the pen. This period is usually touched lightly by professed apologists, and we need not hesitate to pass it over. A deeper study would enable inquirers, we believe, to find much Scepticism both within and without the Church ; but when expression of hostile opinion subjects to pains and penalties, only the bolder spirits utter their beliefs.

After Augustine, whose works may be regarded as a constructive setting forth of the truth as he understood it, the work of defence was left to self-denying and devoted missionaries—perhaps the best of all defenders of the Christian faith. These godly men went forth in the spirit of their Master, armed with the

¹ 'The Martyrs and Apologists,' p. 559. See also Professor Redford's 'Review of the History of Unbelief,' in his 'Handbook of Christian Evidence.'

word of God and the patience of Christ, and their labours did much to change the face of Europe. We must also see in the Crusades, strange as it may seem to some, a kind of effort to meet unbelief, and to spread the faith of Christ.¹ System-builders, too, appeared, who did their best to confirm the faith and enlighten the minds of those who wished to understand the Gospel of Christ. Those most familiar with the writings of this period, tell us that they find much unbelief, and much of unbelieving tendency, even in the defences of learned Doctors of Divinity, and in the devout musings of exalted mystics. The popular interest, however, can never be great in such periods, and therefore we may here leave these matters untouched.

As we come nearer to the seventeenth century, we find many new influences at work tending, either directly or indirectly, to unbelief. Within the Church we have the Mystics and their Mysticism; no candid mind can well doubt that with all its devotion, with all its elevation of spiritual feeling, and its nobility of character, this movement did much, and does much, wherever it appears, to foster Scepticism. Its subjective methods, and its canons of criticism, all point in the direction of Rationalism, however little some Mystics may desire this result, or however simple and pure may be their faith in Jesus Christ.² Without the Church, we have the revival of Paganism, that movement which went by the name of Humanism, and whose force is hardly yet spent. At first the connection of Humanism with the Reformation was not denied, although, of course, the two movements had but little in common. All historians of unbelief attach importance to the great events that took place about the era of the Reformation. The destruction of Constantinople, and the 'opening up of Greek treasures of learning to the more active Western

¹ The Crusades had been purely religious. They represented solely the enthusiasm of the people for dogmatic interests, and they were maintained for more than two centuries by an effort of unexampled self-sacrifice.—*Lecky*. See also Dr. Smith's 'Duff Missionary Lectures,' p. 176.

² Dr. George Matheson, in his 'German Theology,' p. 3, gives a different view of Mysticism.

mind,' the invention of printing, with the rapid diffusion of knowledge resulting therefrom, the discovery of the new world, with the consequent social, political, and intellectual changes taking place—all these, and many other influences then at work, gave a fresh impulse to what is called 'free-thought.' The very Reformation itself did not a little to stimulate tendencies ever latent in the human mind, and ready at such epochs to manifest themselves on the side of unbelief.

The Rationalists of Germany, perhaps we may say and of every other land too, stoutly maintain that they are the true children of Luther; Catholic theologians everywhere support this view of things. We cannot for a moment accept such a view of the Reformation; it may nevertheless be frankly admitted that the Reformation did something to foster and encourage the sceptical spirit. 'The Reformation broke the theological shackles with which men's minds were fettered. It set them thinking, and so gave birth to science.'¹ If, as Dante holds, doubt ever 'nestles at the root of faith,' then we may well believe that wherever the faiths of men are violently shaken, unbelief must be one of the first results. The Reformation was a great shaking-time all over Europe, and many who could no longer accept the old creeds, might for a time, or even permanently, fall into unbelief. We see this process going on among our fellow-subjects in India. Under the influence of western ideas, even under the influence of the geography taught in Government schools, the older religious conceptions of things have to give place, and one immediate result is often the rejection altogether of the supernatural. So, at the time of the great upheaval called the Reformation, the bold, and at times somewhat rationalistic opinions of Luther, and his free handling of portions of the Holy Scripture, outwardly so revered, inwardly so little understood, may have led some of his followers to take up false and even sceptical positions. The temporary alliance also between the Humanists and the Reformation-leaders may have tended in the same direction. There is, as Dr. Cairns remarks, no real antagonism

¹ Froude's 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' vol. i. p. 43.

between spiritual religion and intellectual culture, but there are ever latent dangers connected with movements where these are combined to gain some object common to both.¹ At first the spiritual forces inherent in the Reformation were sufficient to control and to keep back unbelieving tendency, but gradually, as these forces became weaker, the results were serious. The Reformers, too, forgetting their own sad experience of bondage, forged new fetters for the intellects of their fellow Christians, and placed new barriers between the souls of men and the Word of the living God. The spiritual work of Luther and others was in danger of being forgotten amid fierce controversies about points of doctrine, and the energy of the believers was more directed towards the manufacture of new creeds than the conversion of men. Those who had tasted the sweets of liberty, fiercely resented and resisted the new scholasticism of theological doctors and rigid creeds. 'The conflicts of those who, while they discarded the errors and corruptions of a false Church, could not altogether agree among themselves in their desire to formulate their faith, led to a revolt in many minds from all theological definition, and to a questioning and criticizing which gave birth to modern Rationalism. The connection of civil penalties and disabilities with religious dogma, the great error of the Reformation, imposed bonds on the conscience almost as ruinous as those of Rome. Earnest, blameless, high-minded men were imprisoned, banished, even martyred, in the cause of dogmatic uniformity. The theological controversies which were waged, often about speculative distinctions and subtleties, hindered materially the growth of the new life. Out of the deadness of such a time grew rapidly the poisonous plant of unbelief.'²

¹ 'If man cannot, in his fallen state, pursue culture ideally, if he can only imprint on it . . . deep marks of his own prejudices and errors, then it follows that for Christian faith there must always be an element of possible danger in philosophy, in science, and in literature, where Christian influence is not strong enough to lift them up to the ideal use of their own methods, and accomplishment of their own ends.'—*Cairns*.

² 'The Christian's Plea against Modern Unbelief,' p. 29.

It would be very uncritical, as well as very unjust, to hold the Reformation responsible for all this. In all ages, we have to take account of the frailty of the human instruments by which great and abiding blessings are secured to the world. That the Reformation has been a source of blessing to both the Church and the world, no one can well deny. That it contained within it elements of imperfection and weakness, we must also be ready to acknowledge. Luther's too subjective canons of criticism may easily be applied to the books of the Bible in ways that would have shocked and grieved the great Reformer.¹ In addition to this, there were many other things connected with the thought of the time that might prove rocks of offence ; on some of these elements unbelief has laid hold with great eagerness, and hence there is a certain outward plausibility given to the view that the Reformers introduced the spirit of Rationalism into the Church.²

From the beginning of the seventeenth to the early part of the present century, the three great forms of unbelief have been Deism, Pantheism, and Rationalism. A closer survey might enable us to distinguish the Scepticism of the seventeenth from that of the eighteenth century ; for the purpose we have in view at present, such nice distinctions are unnecessary. The difference seems to us to consist chiefly in the greater distance of the latter period from the spiritual movement of Luther and his co-workers. A certain awe and tenderness still rested on the spirit of the seventeenth century Sceptics, as they approached the deeper

¹ 'The Reformation Churches soon departed from the true and living view of Scripture . . . while Luther did not sufficiently guard his assertions, . . . his followers too soon forgot the true position of the Scripture. *The Holy Ghost is above Scripture.*'—Saphir, 'Christ and the Scriptures.'

² For instance, Luther's somewhat free criticisms on certain Books may be followed where *his deep and childlike reverence for Scripture is altogether ignored*. He calls the Epistle of James an 'Epistle of straw,' can find 'nothing evangelical about it.' The Book of Revelation, too, he did not like : 'Let everyone think of it as his mind inclines him, *my* mind can take no pleasure in the book.' See 'History of the Reformation,' by Hagenbach, chap. vii.

problems of faith. Distance weakens this feeling, and hence, perhaps, the different tone of Deism in the last century ; its leading representatives had but little consciousness that in discussing the mysteries of faith they were drawing near to holy ground.

The 'Deist's Bible,' so-called, would be almost as offensive to the thoroughgoing Sceptic of our day as the very New Testament itself. Herbert contended that 'there is a Supreme God ; that He is to be worshipped ; that the principal part of His worship is virtue ; that men ought to repent of sin ; and that there are rewards and punishments here and hereafter.'¹ Even Hume, the 'last of the Deists' in this country,² wished his Scepticism to be regarded as a kind of speculative life by itself, and he professed to think after the manner of the crowd about Theism and practical religion. The Sceptics of that age differed quite as much among themselves as do the rejectors of Divine Revelation in these times. Herbert and Hobbes might both be called Deists, but how different their Deism ! The advance is manifest, and towards the close of this period the unbelief grows bolder and more pronounced. When we reach the eighteenth century, we meet with out-spoken denials of the supernatural ; the men to whom Butler addressed his 'Analogy' were decided enough in their negations ; with them the supernatural was a thing of the past, and Christianity an effete superstition.³

¹ 'Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century,' p. 43.

² Perhaps it is too much to say that Deism is dead. Dr. Dorner, of Berlin, in his 'History of Protestant Theology,' thinks 'Great Britain is not beyond the danger of a return of Deism.' We often meet with professedly religious men, whose beliefs correspond more to Deism than to the Christianity of the New Testament.

³ 'It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious ; and accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.'—Butler's Advertisement to the 'Analogy,' 1736.

Spinoza is the great thinker of the seventeenth century. Cairns speaks of him as the 'greatest and, *for future days*, most influential of the non-Christian writers.' This estimate will be confirmed by those most familiar with the history of thought. Spinoza, indeed, belongs much more to our age than he did to his own. His thought is better understood in the nineteenth than it was in his own century. But neither then nor at any time could he be a popular thinker, and therefore we need not concern ourselves further with his work. Before his thought appears in *popular* unbelief it has to be transformed and interpreted.¹ The great apologist of this age is Pascal, and he, too, has been more read and better understood in later times. This great spiritual thinker brought men face to face with the truth, and sought to make them see its true glory in its own pure and purifying light. 'Pascal is the most evangelical of apologists. It is with him nothing to conquer Atheism or Deism by weapons, if the spiritual glory of Christ has not subdued the heart to living faith. He is rich in new arguments on all the standard topics ; his fragments more than the full thoughts of other men, his divinations more than the results of all their learning. But he never loses the central point of view—the dawn of Christ's heavenly light upon the humble and loving heart. This, too, as he solemnly urges, may be defeated by pride and self-will, that love the darkness. Hence the idea, which he is never wearied of repeating, that Christ came not only to be revealed, but to be concealed.'²

The character of the eighteenth century has been very differently estimated by different authorities. According to some, it was an age of wonderful progress, a period in which the human mind made more rapid advances than it had done for centuries before ; according to others, Carlyle among the rest, it was an age utterly barren of any great spiritual results. Much may be said on both sides of this question ; from our stand-

¹ 'Several of the conceptions . . . defined by him are no longer familiar to us, and have to be learned like the vocabulary of a foreign tongue.'—*Martineau*.

² Cairns.

point the gloomier view is the more truthful, and, so far as the earlier part of the century is concerned, the one most in accordance with all the facts. Believers in, and even apologists for, Revelation were themselves semi-Sceptics, and must be held responsible for not a little of the Scepticism of their time. 'It was the leading object of the Sceptics of the time to assert the sufficiency of Natural Religion. It was the leading object of a large proportion of the divines to prove that Christianity was little more than rational religion accredited by historic proofs, and enforced by the indispensable sanctions of rewards and punishments. Beyond a belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, and a general acknowledgment of the veracity of the Gospel narratives, they taught little that might not have been taught by disciples of Socrates or Confucius.'¹ When the believers in Christ have no higher proofs to offer of the supernatural than the disciples of Confucius, we need not wonder at the triumph of unbelief. Probability may be a guide to life of the highest value, but preachers who tell their hearers that the arguments are ten to one in favour of a future life need not wonder that men say, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' Not by arguments like these did Jesus Christ manifest His *authority* in teaching; not by appeals like these did Paul make his judge tremble; not by motives like these did Whitfield move his hearers, making the penitential tears 'shape white gutters down the black faces of the colliers, black as they came out of the coal-pits,' to listen to the new evangel. Before such 'signs follow' preaching, there must be a higher faith in, and a nearer vision of, the supernatural, than the early part of the eighteenth century possessed.

The spirit of the age was on the side of Deism and Infidelity. It was an age of great laxity of morals, and of much corruption in private and public life. We are not unfamiliar in these days, alas, with corruption in social and political life, and this corruption must not be overlooked when we speak of present

¹ Lecky's 'History of England in the Eighteenth Century,' see chap. ix. See also Leslie Stephen's 'English Thought in the Eighteenth Century.'

unbelief; in that age ministers of State bribed members of Parliament, and votes in support of the Government were paid for as a matter of course out of the public purse. Even bishoprics were sold and given for political support, and high places in Church and State were the rewards of fidelity to ministers. When an Irish Viceroy could openly live a life of immorality, when an English Prime Minister could take his mistress with him to the theatre, when an Archbishop could 'compliment an English Queen on her placid indifference' to her husband's infidelity to his marriage vow, we may well say, with Mr. Pattison, it was a 'day of rebuke and blasphemy—an age whose poetry was without romance, whose philosophy was without insight, and whose public men were without character; an age of "light without love," whose very merits were of the earth, earthy.'¹ Little wonder that there should be much Scepticism at such a time, and that even a poor wretched creed like that of English Deism should find favour with large numbers of the people.²

So far as the apologists of the period are concerned, while we must confess that they had little of the spirit that animated the men who were the first martyrs and confessors, while they lamentably lacked the fine spiritual perception of a Pascal, they were far more than a match for any Deist opposed to them. It is the fashion nowadays to sneer at Butler and Paley. Elegant Pagans like Matthew Arnold may show up the defects of good Bishop Butler, and deeper thinkers may amuse themselves over the 'common-sense' of Paley; it is one thing to deny the adaptation of these writers to meet our wants, quite another to say they failed in dealing with the unbelief of their own age. Butler's 'Analogy' was a conclusive answer to the ordinary arguments of the Deists—it is certainly not a sufficient answer to the Agnostics of our time; this is simply saying that the Deistic and Agnostic positions differ, and that the good Bishop was not dealing with a kind of unbelief that did not

¹ 'Essays and Reviews.'

² If anyone thinks we have over-coloured the picture, let him read Lecky's descriptions, vol. ii. chap. ix., 'England in the Eighteenth Century.'

exist in his age. Even Professor Huxley reminds his 'free-thinking' friends that Butler, 'if he were alive, would make short work of much of the current *à priori* "infidelity."' ¹ Our age is so radically unlike the type of life represented by Paley, that neither friend nor foe has much sympathy with him; in justice to him, however, we must remember that, as Dr. Fairbairn suggests, there have been theories of the resurrection against which Paley's argument is 'perfectly conclusive.' ² Berkeley, too, had a message to deliver which must be allowed its place in apologetics, but his message is not one ever likely to be appreciated by the popular mind, however much it may help the Theistic view of life.

To English-speaking people, the most important defence of Christianity against Deism, and all other 'isms' of last century, is the great spiritual movement associated with the names of Wesley and Whitfield. We have already referred to the effects following the heroic faith and noble patience of the first confessors of Christianity. The spiritual revival of the eighteenth century, in like manner, brought men once more face to face with the realities of the Unseen and Eternal. The 'signs' that followed the preaching of Wesley and Whitfield were more convincing to Sceptics than the sermons of apologists, and the mathematical calculus of reasoners. Mr. Leslie Stephen, in his 'English Thought in the Eighteenth Century,' says of much of the preaching in those days that it was 'good common-place morality, defended by ordinary common-sense. . . . Don't get drunk, or you will ruin your health; nor commit murder, or you will come to the gallows; every man should seek to be happy, and the way to be happy is to be thoroughly respectable!' ³ Need we wonder that there were few converts, or that the Deists liked such sermons? The new evangel appealed to different faculties of man's nature, and touched deeper chords in the human heart. Once more Christianity

¹ See 'Lay Sermons and Addresses.'

² 'Studies in the Life of Christ,' p. 337.

³ We must not forget, however, that there was preaching of a very different order!

proved itself Divine by its power to save men from sin and death ; it made them 'new creatures in Christ Jesus,' and the Sceptics could not resist the argument of a changed life. Truth commended itself, as of yore, to the consciences and hearts of men, and was itself the best evidence of the supernatural. As the outcome of this new life, the close of the century saw many great works undertaken and partly accomplished. The Missionary Societies, whose agents have changed the face of the heathen world, were then formed ; the Bible Society, that has translated the Bible into some three hundred languages and dialects, came into being ; in addition to these, and as the fruit of the same awakening, new life came to the churches, and this life manifested itself in great spiritual, social, and political changes.

We have now reached the present and, for us at least, the most important century of all. The unbelief of our age may be in some respects like the unbelief of other days, for in spirit all forms of Scepticism are similar, yet in many aspects it is unique—a phenomenon such as no age has before witnessed. Fully to deal with it, we should have to trace the Deism of the early and middle portions of last century beyond their purely English manifestations. Neither the Apologists, such as Butler and Paley, nor the preachers, such as Wesley and Whitfield, can be said to have destroyed Deism. After unbelief had done its work here, it crossed the Channel, and assumed forms much more radically antagonistic to Christianity ; it did work, too, that has been more permanently destructive than anything before accomplished. The critical philosophy of Kant may be said to owe its origin to the Scepticism of Hume ; the historian and critic first roused Kant from his 'dogmatic slumbers' and gave the impulse to that criticism whose connection with Rationalism has been so intimate. Dr. Fairbairn speaks of one of the first of the modern sceptical works that appeared in Germany as the 'last words of the dying Deism.'¹ Before these

¹ See article in *Contemporary Review*, May, 1876, 'David Friedrich Strauss.'

last words were spoken, however, unbelief had changed the whole character of religious thought in the German States. What we call German Rationalism, and this is the only point we care to emphasise, is simply the new form assumed by the unbelief of last century. In France Scepticism affected not only religious thought, but also, and that most powerfully, political life.

‘Important,’ says Cairns, ‘as the moral elements were in the English struggle, in the French they were far more decisive; and to look upon this great passage in history chiefly as a theological debate between the assailants of Christianity and its defenders, is to miss its spirit and all its most serious lessons.’ The terrible Revolution, which shook Europe to its centre, must be studied in connection with the religious life and thought of the age before it is understood. Here ‘free-thought,’ so-called, rebelling against the fetters forged by corrupt and decaying priesthoods, revealed in ‘blood and fire and vapour of smoke’ some of its own native but, under happier social conditions, usually concealed tendencies and aspirations.

There are various marks by which the unbelief amid which we live, move, and have our being may be distinguished from the Scepticism of former ages. ‘There are, I think,’ says Cairns, ‘two tendencies which mark unbelief: *first*, a tendency to give the anti-supernatural a deeper, a more thorough, and a more radical character. And, *secondly*, there is a tendency, in harmony with this negation, to strive more earnestly to account for Christianity as a phenomenon, and, if possible, with a favourable rather than an unfavourable estimate of its claims, provided only these are denied a supernatural origin.’ Somewhat similar to this is the view given of the ‘radical difference’ between the Scepticism of the past and present centuries by Dr. Matheson, one of the most thoughtful and popular writers of our time. ‘It is not the difference between better or worse, between more or less, between higher or lower; it is the difference of an opposite standpoint. The Scepticism of the eighteenth century proceeded from the belief that the contents

of revelation were antagonistic to the dictates of nature ; the Scepticism of the nineteenth century proceeds from the belief that the contents of revelation are simply the embodiment of human ideas.¹ According to Dr. Cairns, the great names of our century in Scepticism are Strauss, Renan, and Mill, truly characteristic names, representing the intellectual ferment of three great nations. Probably it may be said of all that they 'have had their day,' and although they have by no means 'ceased to be,' they have ceased to dominate religious thought as they did at one time. The great German began his life by seeking to eliminate the supernatural from the life of Jesus, and ended it by eliminating the supernatural from the life of humanity—fitting termination to such a career, revealing perhaps, more truly than could otherwise have been revealed, how Jesus is the heart of humanity as well as the 'heart of God.' No man has influenced sceptical thought more than Strauss for the past fifty years, yet there is not one unbelieving scholar of any reputation who will accept his authority to-day ; the life of Jesus cannot be truly written by a Strauss.² Still less can we follow the brilliant Frenchman in matters theological. The Jesus of Renan is neither divine nor human, neither the Son of God, nor a truly noble and good man. 'The sweet Galilean vision' of this dreamer will not long enchant the robust Sceptics of an age like ours, with its science and its scientific methods applied to history. The moral fibre is too feeble in Renan : a man who began by imagining that Jesus could lend himself to deceit in order to raise his popularity, might well end by advising the French clergy to stick to

¹ See article on the 'Originality of the Character of Christ,' *Contemporary Review*, Nov., 1878.

² According to Dr. Fairbairn, 'he had a curious moral hardness, a deficiency in moral sympathy and insight, which left him in great degree blind to the sanctity of the sacred, insusceptible of the finer shades of reverence, able to demolish, in what seemed a callous-hearted fashion, the idols and ideals of the race.' How could such a man write a 'Life of Jesus'?

their posts, while rejecting the supernatural; might well eulogize a morality of 'poetic reserves and angelic silences.'¹

Much the same remark may be made about the result of Mill's labours in this region of life and thought. Whatever may be said of Mill's philosophy, which satisfies men less and less, we must reject his Christology. The Jesus of Mr. Mill, like the Jesus of Renan and Strauss, is neither a 'myth' nor an historical personage. Neither Christians nor Atheists, neither Gnostics nor Agnostics, will accept his theology. Mill is very hard on Sir W. Hamilton for bringing back under the form of *faith* what he refuses to accept as *knowledge*; he himself is guilty of the thing he censures in another, for he brings back as a rational hope, or expectation, what he refuses to accept as scientific knowledge or logically valid belief.²

Other names than these, however, must be associated with the characteristic Scepticism of our century. If these have been great in the earlier, others are greater in its later decades. The great revolution in thought associated with the names of Darwin and Spencer, with other cognate movements, must not be overlooked. If we were to select three names connected more with the scientific school, we might add to those already given the name of Professor Huxley, who along with Professor Tyndal has done much to swell the tide of opposition to Christianity in our day. What may be the ultimate result of the work of these pioneers it is, as yet, impossible to say; one thing is certain, they have stood in the first rank of the supporters of those who deny, or ignore, the supernatural.

Comparing, then, the present with the past, we may affirm that never before at any time has the opposition to Christianity been more deep and radical, never before has Scepticism been more thoroughgoing and outspoken. The only phase of thought in the earlier centuries at all to be compared with the unbelief of our day is that associated with the name of Spinoza.

¹ See M. Renan's 'Christ;' 'Essays, Theological and Literary,' by R. H. Hutton, vol. i.

² See his essay on 'Theism,' closing portions.

As we have already suggested, this thinker belongs more to our time than to his own age ; his own consciousness of this was shown by the ambiguous manner in which he gave forth some of his opinions. We may be reminded that the Materialism of Lucretius was as radical as the Materialism of our own time. This is hardly true ; the poet in all ages has been allowed license, but in these days the guesses of Lucretius are given forth as the sober teachings of severe science, and thus the atoms appear among us with an *authority* they never pretended to possess in the days of the poet. The Deist acknowledged so much, that his position was easily turned by apologists like Butler ;¹ but in our day even Theism is denied. The 'Unknown Power' of Spencer must not be termed Creator in the Deistic sense of that much abused word. The Deist did not object to a God who originated all things, if only he were allowed to get rid of a 'constant creation,' in the sense of a sustaining Providence, and to deny the authority of revelation.

Our age refuses to believe in the supernatural, and yet it declares that religion is as natural to man as language or feeling. The Jew rejected the Messiah, and the Pagan world regarded His Cross as foolishness. Our age, strange to say, bids us 'venerate the myth,' and declares that 'never man spake like this Man.' It sees in His work the noblest inspiration of life, in His death the highest ideal of self-sacrifice, and yet it refuses to believe that He came from God, or that He was raised from the dead. It declares that His *actual* is the purest *ideal* life, that His work has done more to regenerate man than all other workers combined, that His name can never perish and His influence never die ; yet it eliminates, or attempts to do so, all the miraculous elements from His biography, and refuses to see in His appearing anything supernatural.

In short, everything must be reduced to the proportions of the purely natural, everything accounted for, and regarded as

¹ 'As against Deism, the force of Butler's argument is undeniable. . . . The shallow optimism of the Deists blinked the obvious facts. Butler recognised them manfully.'—*Leslie Stephen*.

the evolution of what is in humanity. Grant only that religion is the poetic side of human life ; that the Bible is the record of purely human experiences ; that Christianity may be accounted as one among the many human religions, no more sacred, though perhaps higher, than Buddhism—that, in fine, there is no element in it higher than the natural ; that God is only another Name for the ‘Power behind all phenomena,’ unknown and unknowable ; that immortality is a dream, a poetic fancy, man’s longing for higher life simply—and our age will accept Christianity, will reverence Christ as its great Teacher and highest Example !

It would be unfair to close this brief, and most imperfect outline, without remarking that there is another and very different form of unbelief amongst us in these times. We are often told that Scepticism is no longer immoral, that unbelievers, as well as Christians, desire the triumph of a pure morality. This is true of the kind of Scepticism with which we have been dealing. It would be unjust to say that many of the foremost opponents of Christianity desire to break away from its moral moorings. The contrary is the truth ; they are willing to accept its morality if only we reject its supernatural claims.¹ ‘George Eliot’ said that her objection to Christianity was simply the insufficiency of the ‘evidence.’ Professor Huxley will not allow that its ideal is a selfish and unworthy one ; he simply is not convinced by the evidence adduced in its favour. Indeed, some opponents profess to object to Christianity *in the very interests of a pure morality*. Whatever may be said of the *tendency* of many forms of unbelief, it is but common justice to most of the writers named to admit that they are not writing, professedly, in the interests of lax morality. But there are other tendencies at work in all our towns and cities, and we do well to recognise and understand them. The Agnostic is too pliant in his

¹ ‘Unbelief at the present day appears to be distinguished from that of most previous periods, and particularly from that of the last century, by one marked characteristic : that characteristic is that it heartily recognises the obligations of morality.’—Professor Wace, ‘Boyle Lectures’ for 1875.

speech, the Comtist too ambiguous in his language, the literary admirers and eulogists of Christ too invertebrate in their Scepticism, for the adherents of this school. Hence, they not only deny the supernatural, but vehemently oppose all that tends in this direction. To this class of Sceptics, Jesus Christ is no longer the great Moral Teacher and Example of Goodness ; they hate Christ, and try by every means in their power to make others do the same. They attempt to discredit His teaching, question the perfection of His morality, and sneer at the precepts He uttered. They are never weary of speaking against Old Testament Prophets and Preachers, the Apostles of Christ they ridicule, and all Churches and Christians they despise. They identify Christianity with Priestcraft, and represent it as the support and mainstay of all social and political tyranny. The priestly ' army of occupation ' of all creeds they regard as the deadly foes of progress, and, in the interests of human freedom, they profess to oppose the religion of Jesus. We do not care to quote from the writings of this school, for to most people its language, we hope, would be offensive, and to many blasphemous. At the same time we must not ignore its existence, nor must we underrate its social and political, as well as religious, significance. There are many to whom the outspoken denials of this school will be more welcome than the covert attacks of politer men. They are not able to enter into, or to appreciate, the critical discussion of the time ; they care little for the poetic representations of the followers of the religion of Humanity ; *reverence for a Power, at once unknown and unknowable*, will appear to them as extravagant as any claim made on behalf of Christianity ; the ' poetic reserves,' so much lauded by a Renan, they do not much admire. They take note of the fact that critics are said to reject the supernatural, that scientists decline to be guided by the Book of Genesis ; looking at things from this standpoint, they are ready to appreciate a bolder, if perchance a more brutal, handling of these high themes. And when, by cunning lecturers, Christianity is represented as the foe of progress, its adherents the up-

holders of social and political injustice, and its triumph as the knell of freedom, need we wonder if they applaud?

Perhaps it is well that the moral aspects of this controversy should come before us in these bolder forms; 'worship or stone Him!' this seems a blunt way of putting the alternatives open to honest men, yet it has the merit of being at once swift and decisive. No third course is, we believe, ultimately open to man. The failure of the Critical School to solve, on Sceptical principles, the problems with which it has been dealing makes this manifest. The moral weakness of other so-called solutions only serves to deepen the impression. When we find bolder spirits in all the great centres of population, willing and ready to apply these negations to the questions of social and political life, to reconstruct society on a purely Atheistic basis, to banish from life, not only the sublime truths of Christianity, but also its moral ideals and principles, we may be better able to see the drift of much of the other unbelief of our time. 'A universe without a presiding Intelligence is not in any true sense a moral universe.' If the construction of such an ideal universe be the great aim of the intellectual rejectors of Christianity, need we wonder that their bolder comrades should discard the moral restraints so long associated with the religion of Jesus Christ? 'If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink;' if Christ be no Son of God, but a mere creation of the poetic imagination of gifted men;¹ if man was not made in the image of God, but simply evolved without any supernatural control or direction from some 'ape-like ancestor;' if when he dies he returns to dust, and is no more for ever, why should he live under conditions, and act under inspirations, that are the outcome of faith in the supernatural? Sceptics who value the moral element of Christianity, who are anxious that we should make Christ's character our ideal, while rejecting His Divine origin

¹ Later on we shall show the untenableness of this view. Meanwhile, we are assuming that the more 'muscular' opponents of Christianity accept this view of the case. That they do this, however uncritically, we cannot doubt.

and authority, may protest against this theory of life ; to the masses of the people it will ultimately appear more rational than theirs, and it is for our good that the *moral tendency of unbelief* should be thus seen. Not Sceptics, but men with faith in God, faith, too, in the sacredness of conscience and in immortality, created the civilization of which we are justly proud, and the highest elements of our civilization, not to say our religion, can be conserved only by men of faith.¹

¹ See Laveleye's 'Protestantism and Catholicism in their bearing upon the Liberty and Prosperity of Nations.'

CHAPTER III.

SOME OF ITS CAUSES.

‘And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men shall bend their spacious brows
Upon the storm and strife seen everywhere
To ruffle their smooth manhood and break up
With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they may discern
The heart of a lost angel in the earth.’

Lucifer in ‘A Drama of Exile.’

‘Scepticism, with its innumerable mischiefs, what is it but the sour fruit of a most blessed increase, that of Knowledge ; a fruit, too, that will not always continue *sour*.’—CARLYLE.

‘Doubt and unbelief assail for the most part, not the pure essence, but the corrupted forms of Christianity.’—PROFESSOR CHRISTLIEB.

ATHEISM, says Professor Blackie, is a ‘disease of the speculative faculty, which must be expected to reappear from time to time. It indicates, in fact, a chaotic state of mind analogous to that physical chaos which makes its epiphany betwixt the destruction of an old world and the creation of a new.’¹ Whatever we say about the learned professor’s philosophy of the origin of Atheism, we must admit that extreme unbelief is an abnormal state of things. Man is naturally not a Sceptic, but a believer. ‘Trust in testimony is the pivot of human affairs ;’² the whole fabric of our civilization rests upon faith, and the relations of man with his fellow are pleasant and helpful, just in proportion as he believes and trusts. Hence, when we meet with either units or masses who are known as

¹ ‘Natural History of Atheism,’ p. 3.

² Dr. Conder, ‘Basis of Faith.’

unbelievers, we at once inquire into the origin and meaning of their distrust or Scepticism.

We have not met, in the course of our studies on this subject, with any very complete classification of the causes and occasions of Scepticism. Probably, most thinkers feel that anything like an exhaustive treatment of the subject is impossible. That there are general causes of unbelief operating very widely amongst us, all may see and acknowledge; *all* the causes and occasions of Scepticism can be known only to the Searcher of Hearts. Minds are so differently constituted, and the 'environments' of our moral and intellectual life are so different, that what leads one to unquestioning faith may produce in another a tendency to doubt.

There are some who make short work of all such inquiries, by referring all kinds of Scepticism at once and directly to the depravity of the human heart. Unbelief, wherever and under whatever conditions it is found, is simply one of the manifestations of the evil heart in man which leads him to depart from the living God. Doubtless there is truth in such a view of things, but the truth is too general, too much like a truism, indeed, to be of much service to man. The physician is not content with saying that man is liable to diseases; he seeks to study and to understand each separate form of disease, in order that he may trace it to its root, and, if possible, remove its causes. That man is liable to disease, that he lives in a world where germs of disease float about in the very atmosphere, are most important truths, yet they are too vague to be of much practical benefit. We must know more about the conditions under which these germs come into contact with the organs of the human body, and lead to such painful results. So we must not be content merely with tracing unbelief to the depravity of the human heart; this is a 'constant quantity' in human nature, belonging to apologist as well as Sceptic, to the infidel who denies, and the dogmatist who denounces him. We have need of great wisdom in dealing with such a theme, so that we may do justice, on the one hand,

to truth and its authority over man, on the other to whatever of honesty and sincerity there may be in the Sceptic who doubts and rejects. Only by wise and also sympathetic treatment of the subject can we hope for any real benefit to doubters and Sceptics.

Speaking of unbelief in Germany, Professor Christlieb attributes it mainly to four causes. (1) Historical—to the working of those principles in man and in society that have in every age been opposed to the faith of Christ. (2) Scientific—to the rapid progress of modern science, and the consequent changes in the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of men. (3) Causes ecclesiastical and political, such as the corruptions of Christianity in Churches, and in connection with Church life and work; the want of unity among Christians; the too close identification of Churches with political parties on the one hand, and the neglect of political life by Christian men on the other. (4) Causes social and ethical—here special emphasis must be laid on the relation between the moral state of the heart and the beliefs accepted or rejected.¹

Dr. Ellicott, the learned Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, in a recent 'charge,' gives three chief causes of the 'prevalence of suspended belief, and the increase of difficulties in heartily accepting the facts and teachings of Christianity.' These are: (1) The tone and direction of recent historical criticism; (2) the deductions that have been drawn from the real, or alleged, discoveries of modern science; and (3) the moral and metaphysical difficulties supposed to be involved in, or connected with, the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. That these three causes are in operation no one can well deny; to them we may, perhaps, attribute much of the more intellectual forms of unbelief, as these appear in the thought of our time.²

The more *popular* aspects of Scepticism demand a fuller treatment, and we must be prepared to descend into the arena

¹ See Professor Christlieb's 'Modern Doubt and Christian Belief.'

² The first of the Bishop's *causes* is, however, one of the very effects of the Scepticism that has to be accounted for.

where humbler motives and less 'scientific' causes contend together, before we understand the doubts, difficulties, and unbelief of the many. Of course, causes operating on the few, by degrees reach the masses of the people; they appear, however, in different forms, and under more popular aspects. The applications of scientific, or so-called scientific, canons of criticism to the Sacred Writings are now met with in the popular periodicals of the day; lecturers in 'halls of science' are ever ready to popularize the latest utterances of university professors, if these happen to be sceptical in tendency. Science, too, lifts up her voice in the gates, and the deepest secrets of her wisest, as well as of her loudest-speaking sons, are proclaimed on the housetops, and discussed in the workshops of the land. Moral and metaphysical difficulties are no longer confined to the literature of the Schools; this is an age of publicity, and men and women who have been on the rack, or who have found the moral difficulties of faith too much for them, usually take care to publish widely their experiences for the benefit of their neighbours. Hence Bishop Ellicott's causes are often found at work in quarters where they might be least expected, and where they are but ill-understood.

These 'offences' must come in our time. The Bible has a literary history, and like every other form of literature must be subjected to criticism. Nor are they the true friends of the Bible who shrink from this process as from a plague or pestilence. 'The abnegation of reason is not the evidence of faith, but the confession of despair. Reason and reverence are natural allies, though untoward circumstances may sometimes interpose and divorce them.'¹ No doubt, all such critical inquiries are unsettling to the popular mind; the action of some of the chief forces in history has been unsettling. Luther must have much disturbed the faith of many simple souls, yet we glorify the Reformation, and attribute to its influence much of what is best in modern religious life. Men must bear with

¹ Bishop Lightfoot, Preface to 'St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.'

these disturbing elements in life, and learn to 'prove all things,' holding fast only what is good. The Scepticism connected with the 'tone and tendency of historical criticism,' is due quite as much to the unbelieving timidity of those who accept, as to the critical boldness of those who reject Revelation. Which tends most to unsettle faith, the newer criticism of men like Dr. Smith, or the outcry of honoured Fathers who say he is taking away the very 'ark of God,' and that a simple quotation by the Saviour of a sentence or two from the Pentateuch must for ever settle the whole question of its Mosaic authorship? Which tends most to encourage Scepticism—the belief that in the 'Song of Songs' we have the love of Christ and His Church represented, or the belief of some critics, ancient and modern, that we have there simply a glorification of pure human affection? Which causes most perplexity—the newer criticism, or some older theories of the inspiration of the Bible?¹ We must admit to the full all that is said about the 'unsettling tendencies' of criticism, but we must give a larger share of the responsibility for this to Churches that stifle the expression of opinion, and insist on men believing, in all respects, as their fathers believed.² Let us frankly admit that there are yet many unsolved problems connected with

¹ 'I have been informed by Christian men who have devoted themselves to the study of physical science, that nothing so heavily presses on their faith as the persistency with which the truth of Revelation has been identified with these theories of inspiration. . . . I have, during the last six years, been present at discussions at which I heard not less than one hundred addresses, made by unbelievers who belong to this class of society, on points which they consider to involve the truth of Christianity. Taking these objections as a whole, at least two-thirds of them owe their entire plausibility to their identification of that particular form of inspiration which is usually designated verbal or mechanical, with a Divine Revelation.'—Row's 'Bampton Lecture,' p. 428.

² 'Criticism has performed, and continues to perform, the most essential service to the Christian cause . . . it throws light in a thousand ways upon the Bible and its teaching. There may be those who do not want to be troubled with it. . . . They are not wise Christians.'—Dr. Rainy, 'The Bible and Criticism.'

Biblical criticism, and we may disarm not a little of popular suspicion.

That much mental unrest has been caused by the theories, and alleged discoveries, of men of science is but too manifest. New methods of study, new phraseology—perhaps we ought to say new forms of *dogmatism*¹—have done much to create and foster unbelief. Learned ‘professors’ of physical science have not been unwilling to score points against faith by ‘showing up’ before popular audiences the unscientific character of parts of the Bible. Forgetting that Holy Scripture teaches, not biology and astronomy, but the way of salvation, many have had doubts awakened and fears suggested by the bold fancies and forecasts of Evolutionists. We believe this is only a temporary result of scientific progress; men will soon perceive that the real discoveries of science have furnished far more facts in favour of faith than solid arguments for unbelief.² After the novelty of the terms used has passed away, people will discover that the ‘physiologist’ of mind, and the teachers who pretend to explain all mental phenomena without the aid of anything higher than so called material forces, have only re-stated, in terms of matter and motion, the old problems of life. Even if we could measure, ever so accurately, the rate at which nerve-force is transmitted—even if we could point out all the physical concomitants of mental action and moral feeling—we should be no nearer the goal. Candid ‘freethinkers’ are beginning frankly to confess this; nevertheless, these processes cause disquiet of mind, and the first results, to many, are doubts and Scepticism. In consequence of the false lights held out by daring sailors on the ‘sunless gulfs of doubt,’ many have

¹ ‘We must once more make the statement that it is not we who are the Dogmatists, but rather that school of scientific men who assert the incompatibility of science with Christianity.’—Preface to third edition of ‘Unseen Universe,’ by Professors Stewart and Tait.

² Even the ‘hypothesis of evolution may lead in effect to a conception of finality which only differs from that commonly formed by being grander.’ Janet’s ‘Final Causes,’ p. 256.

been induced to leave the quiet moorings and safe anchorage of an earlier and happier faith.

With regard to the 'moral and metaphysical difficulties connected with Divine Revelation,' and even with Theism itself, it becomes us to speak with humility. Some refuse to admit that there are such difficulties. They attribute all such doubts to the rebellion of the unregenerate heart, and to the wish expressed by the Sacred Psalmist that there were no God—no Moral Ruler to call them to account. We can but remind such theorists that their views and the facts of life are at variance. 'Some of these moral difficulties,' says Dr. Rigg, 'are so oppressive and so staggering to our incompetent human reason, that they might well tempt the mere reasoner, the mere logician, the mere metaphysician, to give up faith in a personal God, if so to do were not really to involve one's self in more than equivalent difficulties of the very same class, and, in truth, contradictions both intellectual and moral.'¹

Professor Jevons remarks, 'the hypothesis that there is a Creator at once powerful and all-benevolent is surrounded, as it must seem to every candid investigator, with difficulties verging closely upon logical contradiction. The existence of the smallest amount of pain and evil would seem to show that He is either not perfectly benevolent, or not all-powerful. No one can have lived long without experiencing sorrowful events of which the significance is inexplicable.'² The Professor, while fully recognising these and other such-like difficulties, evidently thinks it both rational and commendable to look for further knowledge in a higher state of intelligence. Professors Stewart and Tait, very competent witnesses, tell us that not a 'few of the most earnest, and the most virtuous of men' in these days, doubt the existence of any future life. They suggest that many of these are 'unwilling unbelievers, compelled by the working of their intellects to abandon the desire

¹ See 'Discourses and Addresses on Religion and Philosophy.'

² See Professor Jevons' 'Principles of Science,' vol. ii. p. 468.

of their hearts only after many struggles and much bitterness of spirit.¹

'These difficulties,' says a recent writer, whose name is not given, 'are felt by men of all classes. I have found them existing and working in minds of widely different calibre and culture. In hours of earnest and solemn conversation I have heard them expressed by educated and deeply thoughtful men. I have listened to them from the God-fearing woodman as he rested on his axe, and discussed them with the fiercely infidel tramp in the filthy lodging-house!'² 'God forbid,' says Dr. Conder in his able and very suggestive lectures on the 'Basis of Faith,' 'that any whose faith finds sure foothold on Divine truth, and fixes a firm grasp on Divine love, should have anything but sympathy and brotherly compassion for a soul wrapt in the storm-shadow of this awful doubt, unable to seize the life-line or feel the bottom. For our own, as well as for the doubter's sake, let us be honest. Our faith is worth little if it fears to look doubt in the face. Opiates are dangerous remedies, and I cannot but fear that the effectual way of ministering to the growth of unbelief has been *the practice of smoothing over the surface of difficulties, ignoring or undervaluing their real force, and leaving them to rankle unsatisfied, inflamed with a sense of our lack of candour.*'³

Looking fairly at Bishop Ellicott's causes in the light of these and other testimonies, we must acknowledge that they are operating both widely and powerfully in the direction of Scepticism.

But the more we study the *popular* side of present-day unbelief, the more we shall be convinced that other causes are at work ; to some of these we must now turn our attention.

I. Perhaps we ought to start by admitting that the *truth* itself is often an occasion of unbelief. In political life, no sooner does one party triumph over the other and gain the

¹ 'The Unseen Universe.'

² From article on 'Modern Unbelief' in the *Rainbow*, April, 1877.

³ 'Basis of Faith,' p. 425.

supreme control of affairs, than there arises a tendency in certain quarters to encourage a spirit of opposition and resistance to its authority; so, in spiritual life, the claims of the Church of Christ, the very existence of an authoritative revelation, may indirectly awaken a spirit of doubt and resistance. This influence of the truth itself in promoting a spirit of unbelief has been well noticed by the acute Mozley in his 'Essay on Blanco-White.' 'In considering,' he says, 'the great influence which the Inquisition had in making Blanco-White an infidel, it must not be forgotten that simple Christian dogmatic truth, standing by itself, has a tendency to produce that effect upon many minds. It is a melancholy fact that persons have been often driven by the mere presence of the Church's teaching into a worse infidelity than they would have had without it. The Church is not, of course, responsible for such an effect; *but she is responsible for any tendencies in that direction, arising from unnecessary and narrow-minded intolerance.*'¹ Words, these, most true and most important! The very existence and authority of law awakens within man corrupt desires, causes him to feel strivings of an opposition, of which, under other conditions, he might have remained largely unconscious; so the claims of Christ, when presented to man, when urged home to the heart and conscience, may even suggest the doubt by which man seeks to evade them. This influence neither the believer nor the sceptic sufficiently remembers, but there can be no doubt it works very powerfully in society, and leads to much mental opposition to the moral claims of truth. Nor can we lower the standard on this account; we must seek to make the testimony of truth as effective as possible, and in spite of the opposition of the human heart and will, we must assert to the full the claims and authority of the Gospel of Christ. Wherein we often err is in not giving sufficient prominence to this fact, that just as the conducting-pipe may affect the purity of the water that flows through it, so the essential imperfection of language, the hardness and selfishness of the

¹ Mozley's 'Essays, Historical and Theological,' vol. ii.

human heart, often the pride, bigotry and intolerance of the human medium, may injuriously affect the truth spoken, and thus awaken greater opposition.

This aspect of the case has as direct a bearing on the teaching of the apologist as on the unbelief of the sceptic. If the unregenerate heart may oppose, so the overbearing and intolerant intellect of the advocate may not seldom distort, the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 'A judicious silence,' says Francis de Sales, 'is always better than truth spoken without charity.' If the truth itself may offend, its teacher must beware lest he make the offence greater. 'The conviction that truth is the living word of God communicated to men as a character alone can be communicated—to different minds by different teaching, and by differently winding courses,—to some slowly but intensely, in points of vivid light with large intervals of unintelligent darkness,—to others with rapid evolutions of the general outline and meaning of his providence and discipline, yet perhaps with a less deep and constant sympathy of moral life,—to all who eagerly seek what is right with a gradual clearness and eventual certainty,—this is the trust on which alone true catholicity of feeling can be based, and with which indifference is wholly incompatible.'¹

II. We must not forget the character of the age in which we live, and the tendency of many of the forces now at work to lead away from the Christian faith. At a certain stage of life some are afflicted with what medical men term 'growing pains;' so, many persons suffer mentally and spiritually from a similar disease. Knowledge grows indeed amongst us, but wisdom often 'lingers' behind. There is in the general mind a feeling of impatience with all protracted intellectual effort, which is one of the best signs of its immaturity, and one of the best feeders of the unbelieving tendency. So many opinions, once considered essential, have been abandoned, so many views, once resisted most fiercely, have been quietly accepted as among the commonplaces of present knowledge, so many

¹ 'Theological Essays,' by R. H. Hutton, vol. i. p. 311.

beliefs have been modified by other beliefs, now generally held, that the public mind may be said, with truth, to be to a great extent chaotic in matters religious.¹ These movements are not confined to religious thought alone, nor do they affect simply the spiritual life of the people. All matters human and divine are to-day fiercely debated; the old is rejected because it is ancient, and the new accepted solely because of its novelty. Well may the faith of centuries, the faith of the first founders of Christianity, suffer at such a time. Hence the peculiar meaning and force attributed by many to such phrases as, 'advanced thought,' 'modern culture,' 'liberal views of truth,' 'the spirit of the age,' and other like expressions. Many actually think it a manly thing, the sure sign of a robust intellect, to doubt, to question, and to despise the faiths of the past. Just as the Deists of Butler's time considered Christianity a thing of the past, so the readers of our reviews—men and women who skim lightly the surface of articles by modern Agnostics—speak of Christianity as a 'phase of thought' that is passing away, and that is out of harmony with the beliefs of the age. Those who know from experience the truths of the Gospel, whose feet are firmly planted on the Rock of Ages, and in whose hearts Christ's teachings have found a home, may smile at such manifestations, may consider them too childish for serious consideration; such representations tend to Scepticism none the less, and they are the outcome of a state of mind, and of a habit of life, utterly alien to faith.

Ours is a critical age, but these are not critics;² they are mere reckless destroyers and rejectors, men and women with no deep feeling and with no earnest purpose in life. Yet their influence is great, if temporary, and such as it is, it is all on the side of the shallowest forms of popular Scepticism. We are

¹ 'The scientific and religious conceptions of the world seem to stand out at this moment in sharpest antagonism.'—*Fairbairn*.

² 'Biblical criticism is . . . the legitimate interpretation of historical facts. . . . The great value of historical criticism is that it makes the Bible more real to us.'—*Dr. Robertson Smith*.

often struck with the amount of real faith underlying the avowed unbelief of great thinkers ; these, so-called, 'advanced thinkers' are mere fault-finders, and their very beliefs are but Scepticism.

III. We see in connection with Christianity itself, or at least in connection with the thought and teaching of Christians, many tendencies towards Scepticism.

We need not dwell on the merely literary form of these doubt-suggesting, doubt-stimulating influences. We have Christian poets whose poetry can hardly help the cause of New Testament Christianity, poets whose influence, though on the whole morally pure, is weakening to simple faith. 'Brief lays,' born of sorrow, intended to soothe, to comfort, and to inspire, sometimes suggest hopes 'larger' than are justified by the Christian records to which ultimate appeal must be made. Emerson, it seems, claimed to be regarded as a 'Theist' in his closing years ; many young men have learned from him and others to seek for a solution of life's enigmas rather in the direction of Pantheism than Christianity. Even where Pantheism has failed to satisfy, and it never can satisfy the popular mind, it may have been strong enough to weaken the influence of a purer faith. The late Dr. Norman Macleod, when editor of *Good Words*, bravely rejected a novel prepared for that periodical, on the ground that its representations of Christian character were hostile to Christianity. Alas ! how many novelists, who would not like to be considered Sceptics, have helped the cause of unbelief by their delineations of character ; as if, forsooth, only men and women who lack robustness of intellect and native energy of soul accepted the Christian creed ! This is in keeping with the remark of a well-known writer, after the death of the late Mr. J. S. Mill, that if Mill had not been a great thinker he might have been a good Christian ! Such sneers chiefly come back upon those who make them ; whatever else may be said, no one familiar with the history of the Christian Church can doubt, that from St. Paul to Faraday, Christianity has received the homage of the excellent of the earth. To

these poets, novelists, and literary men on both sides of the Atlantic, and to their work, literary and otherwise, are due a vast amount of the doubts and questionings especially of young men.

We must not omit to add to these the names of some distinguished Unitarian teachers both in this country and America; by these many minds have been led away from belief in the authority of Scripture, and along with this they have often rejected what their teachers most firmly held.

There are two forms of teaching, as it seems to us, specially responsible for popular unbelief in our generation. The first is what may be termed the Broad-Church type; we do not use this phrase in its more local, and perhaps technical, sense, as representing certain well-known leaders of thought in the Church of England, but rather as including teachers to be found elsewhere, men who handle Scripture and Scripture doctrine with an amount of freedom which is hardly consistent with any kind of loyalty to what is most distinctive in the Bible. Many of these writers and teachers are themselves, no doubt, true believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and yet they have often helped to suggest doubt to others.¹ Their so-called broader views do not harmonize easily with the simple faith and distinct teachings of the Apostles, and minds that yield to their spell may not always be able to rest satisfied with the platitudes and apparent evasions of their masters. If anyone thinks this language too strong, let him study the correspondence that appeared in the newspapers about the time Mr. Stopford Brooke resigned his position as a clergyman in the Church of England. There were then men in holy orders who did not scruple to state that Mr. Brooke ought to have remained where he was, *even after ceasing to hold the theology of the Church*. Such teachers would be ready to praise the 'poetic reserves and angelic silences' Rénan delights to see in

¹ See the recent edition of 'Anglican Theology' by Rev. Dr. Rigg, especially the chapter introductory to the general memoir of Kingsley prefixed to this work.

the French clergy. We do not require to discuss this theology ; its tendency, we do not say its intention, has been to weaken the faith of many in the essential truths of Christianity, to undermine the doctrine of the Incarnation, and consequently to give Christ a lower place in the thought of the age. There are minds that may be content to remain without any distinct conception of truth, willing to leave the exact place of Christ in the scale of being undetermined, to use language in a kind of poetic fashion, and not to inquire too closely into its truer and ultimate meaning ; there are other minds that cannot rest without definite opinions and strong convictions. They must either worship Christ, or reject Him ; they must trust their whole being to the mercy of God as revealed in the cross of Christ, or they must see in this cross simply a noble act of self-sacrifice and no more ; for such minds the see-saw theology is unsatisfactory. Hence, when they begin with 'broad' teachings, they generally end with the rejection of all that is supernatural.

Over against this must be set what Mr. Hutton has not inaptly called the 'Hard Church' teaching. The two tendencies are in a sense complementary, and in their mutual action and reaction are responsible for much that is sceptical in the public mind. The one creates a feeling of doubt and suspicion, the other fosters and encourages this by its criticisms and denials ; the one irritates the mind by its sometimes unjust representations, while the other helps to justify the doubts that have begun to arise by its explanation of parts of the Evangelical Creed. True, many belonging to the 'Hard Church' have ever considered themselves the very cream of the Evangelical party in all churches ; they have stood forth prominently and pre-eminently as the upholders and defenders of the faith, and have regarded themselves as models of orthodoxy and fidelity to the truth. Yet they have, somehow, created opposition instead of sympathy by many of their representations. They are too ready to denounce all doubters as men who set up 'human reason' against Divine authority ; they are fond of calling those who do not accept their opinions 'rationalists,'

and they show a strong inclination to forbid any exercise of the intellectual faculty that does not lead to results, long ago tabulated in Reformation Creeds. We give such men the utmost credit for sincerity, but they often show sad lack of Christ-like patience and sympathy with those whose chief hindrances are their intellectual difficulties. From such teachers and teaching, many profess to have received their first lessons in doubt and Scepticism. Mr. Arnold rails at the over-familiarity of certain thinkers with the Divine decrees; the criticism may be somewhat sneeringly expressed, but as against this school it is not unjust. Men who insist on knowing too much about the Divine methods of government, about the reason why this and that 'judgment,' has been sent, must remember that they weaken faith in the wisdom and goodness of the Creator by their philosophy.

The relation of current theories about the future of the impenitent to the growing Scepticism of the age, is a subject too large for proper treatment here. That there is a very close connection must be admitted by all who have any real acquaintance with either Sceptics or Scepticism. The question is not one of words or of philology, but about the moral character of the Divine Being—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. From very different quarters there come testimonies that are strangely uniform about the unbelief-producing tendencies of certain teachings about the future life. Sir James Stephen, in his 'Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography,' reminds us that most of the doubts of men in our time *originate* here. The Rev. Edward White, in his 'Life in Christ,' speaks very emphatically in the same sense; an author already cited brings forward the case of an 'unusually intelligent and well-read working man' who gives his experience thus: 'I look back upon twenty years of my life with feelings of horror. I knew not where to gain help and light and comfort, and had I not at length, by earnest and independent search after truth, obtained direct from the Scriptures brighter and happier views of God and His purposes than those which were pronounced orthodox, I

should have sunk into utter infidelity.' Much the same account of their religious experience is given by other earnest men and women; moreover, the minds that feel these doubts most keenly are often the most tender and sensitive to the power of truth. There are minds of a different character upon which such representations as used to be current make but little real impression; they either accept indolently, or pass them by as a matter of no moment, nor can they ever be brought to understand, much less to sympathize with, the difficulties felt by others in connection with this awful theme. We shall not attempt to give specimens of the kind of 'hard theology' to which we refer; exaggeration is only too easy in dealing with a subject like this, and the controversies of recent years have made the public mind familiar with many strange doctrines. But we would earnestly entreat those who preach at street corners, or from more elevated positions, about this subject, to remember that many minds begin here to break with Christianity. It becomes us in dealing with the future life, whether of righteous or wicked, *not to speak more than we know*, not to forget that the silences of Christ and His Apostles are here as suggestive as their speech.¹ The New Testament, as Stewart and Tait remark, teaches a doctrine about the future life truly 'awful,' so much so, that language fails to bring it fully before the mind; it does not teach, and it ought not to be made to teach, a doctrine fairly described by the same writers as 'grotesque;'

¹ 'There is yet a reserve to the doctrine of the immediate after-life, still a veil cast over it, we may reverently say, even in the New Testament. The most modern notions of a sudden transition to the highest heavens, and to the perfect life, are, perhaps, as far to the one extreme, as the descriptions which Koheleth gives us in his gloomy mood are to the other. This idea of the dead passing straightway into a busy active state of existence, in these respects resembling the present life, with its proud talk of progress, was unknown to the Early Church, as its liturgies and funeral hymns evidently show. The doctrine of the *immediate after-life*, as we have said, has still a shadow cast upon it.'—Professor Tayler Lewis on the Book of Ecclesiastes in Lange's 'Commentary.'

it will be well for us also not to *improve* upon 'the solemn but markedly reserved' language of Scripture on such points.¹

IV. The 'corruptions of Christianity' are responsible for perhaps the larger portion of popular unbelief. 'Doubt and unbelief,' says Christlieb, 'assail for the most part not the pure essence but the corrupted forms of Christianity.' Those familiar with the Scepticism of our large cities and towns, know well not only the truth but the importance of such an observation. There are Sceptics, and there is a kind of Scepticism, but very little affected by such corruptions, whether they are seen in connection with ecclesiastical societies or the characters of individual Christians. Some unbelievers even are strong enough to rise above the incidental in Christianity; to them, not the follies and the frailties of Christian men and women, but the claims of the Gospel and the distinctive character of Christianity are the real offence. These are, however, the few, and it is not the unbelief of the select few, but of the many, that we are now considering.

Take the Scepticism that appears in popular debates, the unbelief that asserts itself by sneers, sarcasms, and often bitter reproaches against Christianity, the unbelief that keeps thousands from our churches on the Lord's day,—it lives and thrives chiefly on the corruptions of Christianity. It loves to deal with the immoralities of patriarchs and Bible heroes, with 'cursing Psalms,' with the strifes, divisions, and separations among professing Christians;² its daintiest fare is not the moral and metaphysical problems of the Bible, but the inconsistent lives of those who call themselves by the name of Jesus.

Professor Christlieb speaks of German unbelief arising from lack of sympathy on the part of church-leaders with the social

¹ See 'Unseen Universe.' Professor Blackie refers to this subject in the 'Natural History of Atheism,' suggesting (he is Professor of Greek) that 'Christian Doctors' and 'Biblical interpreters' do not give sufficient weight to the 'essentially popular' character of the language used by Bible writers.

² 'Truly everyone who values the name of Christian should daily pray to God for a fresh outpouring of the spirit of unity.'—*Dr. Döllinger*.

aims and aspirations of the people. These 'occasions of stumbling' are by no means confined to Germany: we have but to listen to the bitter tone in which sceptical lecturers speak of the indifference of the churches and their members to the social condition and political aspirations of the masses, to be convinced that this cause operates among ourselves. Secularists in English towns will point to the sad condition of the English labourer, to his low wages and wretched home, to the little interest that used to be taken in his welfare by 'Squire and Parson,' as a proof that the Christianity of our time is a mere sham and pretence.¹ We may protest against this conclusion, may say that it is alike unreasoning and unreasonable; reason does not so rule and control our own opinions, that we can afford to treat this argument with neglect. We have to consider the *moral effect* of such opinions on the many, not their logical effect upon the mind of the trained thinker. Nor is it difficult for a clever speaker or writer to create a strong feeling in favour of this view of life. Jesus Christ lived among the poor, and ever sought to raise them to higher things. His disciples were all poor men, and they cared little for what we call social influence or position. How easy to paint a picture that shall be a painful contrast to this—to represent the neglected labourers on the one hand, and the luxurious aristocracy and rich middle class on the other, and the servants of Jesus ever taking the side of the rich against the poor! Not the absolute truth of such pictures, but the amount of truth in them, and the ease with which they may be drawn, make them powerful in leading many to feel hostile to Christianity and its representatives.

¹ 'Christianity, as Christianity, is opposed to civic freedom, free thought, free speech, free action. . . . Though its influence is much less than it used to be, both in depth and expanse, and is decreasing year by year, it still floods wide tracts, making barren fens and swamps of what should be, and what will be, when it is drained off, among our most fruitful fields. . . . If it no longer makes saints and martyrs, it makes serfs and bigots,' etc.—Charles Watts, 'Secularism in its Various Relations.'

To the miserable controversies of our ecclesiastical life, the sacerdotal assumptions, the haughty and arrogant claims of one class of men, and their contempt for others more truly Christ-like than themselves perhaps, the strifes about outward postures and ceremonies, the too common imputation of motives in such debates, and the evident want of true charity, must be attributed much of the antagonism to Christianity seen among the people. So long as there are in the State gigantic monopolies, so long as one class claims authority over another, equally loyal and equally worthy, so long there must be controversy and strife and alienation of heart. But while Christians are debating these questions, and while each party stoutly holds its own, there are thousands outside neglected by all; and these are often ridiculing all churches and pointing out how little Christianity has done for its most devoted adherents. All this tends towards that practical neglect which is the best recruiting ground for popular Scepticism.

Another feeder of the Sceptical tendency is the worship of wealth and mere worldly success by all the Churches. According to Sceptics, all Churches and all Christians agree here. They say we give the highest places in the Church, not to the most Christ-like men, but to the richest members. They point to our methods of getting money, our habit of judging preachers and preaching by this test; to our severity towards the sins of the poor, whilst we are winking at the vices and the vicious luxury of the rich; to our conventional, not Scriptural, standards of morality, and to the exceptions ever made in favour of rich sinners. We may say there is exaggeration in the pictures drawn, but we cannot deny many of the charges brought against us. When alongside of our practices we place Christ's teaching about riches, we can hardly wonder that Scepticism is fostered.¹

¹ Speaking of Christ's teaching about wealth, His solemn warnings about the deceitfulness of riches, etc., the late Mr. Henry Dunn remarks: 'Modern piety, however, disclaims this doctrine. Its exhortation is "Get money to any extent that may be consistent with integrity, and use it aright. God has devolved upon His Church the conversion of the world, a work which

We declare that intemperance is the greatest curse of our land, yet we accept the 'munificent' gifts of rich distillers to build temples for the worship of God; we may occasionally expel from our churches *poor* members for vicious acts, but we are wonderfully tolerant towards the sins of those who purchase for themselves, by bribery, seats in Parliament; we may in words protest against all tampering with principle, yet we often act as if the end sanctified the means; all these and many other 'corruptions of Christianity' are both common and regarded as commonplace, on them popular infidelity lays hold, and by means of them it is able to prejudice the mind of many against the religion of Jesus Christ.

V. But while it is true that all these and a hundred other influences are at work in society, making unbelief easy and faith increasingly difficult, there is another fruitful cause of Scepticism to which we must now direct attention. In one sense, this is the most important of all to the Sceptic himself, for it *brings directly home to him his personal responsibility for his unbelief*. 'Wherever,' says Christlieb, 'there is real alienation from the Gospel, ethical causes have much to do with it. Each man's position towards Christianity is ultimately determined by the inward condition of his heart and will. . . . In Divine and spiritual things no one errs entirely without his own fault.' These sentences are true and profoundly important. When discussing the causes of intemperance, we are compelled to bring home to the consciences of all who drink, all who sell, all who manufacture, and all who by legislation sanction these drinks, their responsibility for the evils of which we complain. We must give full value to all the agencies at work against sobriety, whether directly or indirectly; but while doing this, we must never forget to remind the individual drinker of his moral freedom and his responsibility for its abuse. We blame society,

can only be carried on in proportion as silver and gold are dedicated to His cause, *therefore* acquire largely, if possible, and give liberally." No class of men seem to us more in danger than rich men. The world worships them, and instead of delivering its Master's message, the Church too often joins in the homage.

inasmuch as it excites his passions, and stimulates his appetite for alcohol, yet we hold him a sinner. Society tempts him indeed, but he yields to the temptation, thus inwardly responding to the outward solicitation.

In the same way we have to discriminate in dealing with unbelief. We know there are many influences at work all around making faith difficult, yet we must hold the Sceptic responsible for so readily yielding to these untoward influences. Well for us to realize that in connection with outward Christianity there are many 'occasions of stumbling' to faith; this will help us to be more diligent in 'making straight paths for our feet.' Well also to remind men that, in a world like ours, offences must come, that men have been created for faith, not for unbelief, and that moral character is seen in the power to triumph over hindrances like these.

There is now, and there has ever been, an 'offence of the cross,' which arises not from the errors, failings, and inconsistencies of Christians, but from the pride of the human heart, and its unwillingness to submit life to the yoke of Christ. 'Truth,' as Dr. Mozley reminds us, 'is a yoke,' and although to those who know and love it this 'yoke is easy,' there is that in every man which leads him to rebel against its authority.

Many Sceptics have themselves created the very difficulties of which they so loudly complain. Many receive their first lessons in Scepticism, not from false teaching, not from the bad examples of professing believers, but from their efforts to justify to others the positions their own pride, worldliness, or neglect, have led them to take up in relation to the Gospel. Not seldom, it is to be feared, men who will not submit their hearts to religion find it convenient to offer objections to Bible teachings. When they are demonstrating the absurdity of some Old Testament story, the inconsistency of some Christian life, or the unpractical nature of some command of Christ, they are really fortifying themselves against the power of some moral truth that has been pressing too closely on their conscience.¹

¹ 'We console ourselves for our vices by declaring them necessities, and clothe in the mantle of science the testimony of a corrupted heart.'—*Lacordaire*.

There is a subtle pride of heart, an unwillingness to submit life to the authority of truth, a desire to live selfishly, that accounts for not a little popular Scepticism. It were unjust to the Sceptic to overlook this ; many in their hearts hate a certain type of teaching, they find this in Christianity, and they will not receive it. Such a view of life is contrary, perchance, to all their habits of mind, and opposed to their plans, pursuits, or purposes in life. It is this secret *moral antipathy* that inspires the outward and apparently *intellectual opposition*.¹


One of the idols of our age is sincerity : ' Given only a sincere desire to find the truth, a sincere belief in this or that, then, whether we accept or whether we reject Christianity, it matters little ; not *truth*, but *sincerity*, is the great thing in life.' A hazy, dim sort of consciousness that this is the true philosophy of life pervades much of the popular Scepticism of our time. Truth as something objective, an authority above us and outside of us, to which we must submit intellect and heart, is little thought of ; our age thinks of truth mainly as a subjective feeling or consciousness of sincerity—unconsciously, perhaps, yet none the less really, it says with one of old, ' Man is the measure of all things.' In the realm of outward nature men have long ago abandoned such an ideal. They have learned that man is the ' minister and interpreter of nature,' that he must simply obey, not dictate, the conditions under which truth shall manifest itself to his mind. Nature, as a great thinker reminds us, does not proclaim her secrets on the house-tops—she whispers them in the ear of the earnest listener ; only the man who has the childlike mind can enter the kingdom of nature, as Lord Bacon long ago taught his age.

Men fail to see that the kingdom of heaven is opened to us on the same conditions, and hence their unbelief. Not because churches are sometimes corrupt and Christians inconsistent,

¹ ' Exact science is a knowledge of the intellect, which may be imparted to every man of sound mind. Faith is a confidence of the heart, which we can only affirm and justify for those in whom the moral condition for the recognition of the truth is to be found.'—*Oosterzee*.

not because there are moral difficulties in Revelation that hinder faith, *but because they will not come to Christ as little children, submitting wills and minds to Him, and asking Him to guide them into the knowledge and love of truth, are they among the Sceptics.*

To ignore this cause of unbelief were blindness itself; to give it little prominence were to betray the interests of truth, which claims not only sincerity within, but an honest submission of the intellect, the heart, and the life to itself. While, therefore, we try to explain the Scepticism of the age, while we seek to show that existing conditions in society are unfavourable to simple faith, we at the same time assert the sacred authority of truth. Only the 'All-Seeing' can read the secret thoughts, and tell how many err because of this pride of heart, this unwillingness to come to the light; but that there is much of this pride in popular Scepticism anyone may see if only he will mark its utterances. No one in our time has better pointed out this danger than the clear-sighted Canon Mozley, and with some of his sharp and incisive words we must conclude this chapter. 'Here is the point. The fact is that the love of truth in fallen man is a corrupted affection, just as natural love is. It betrays the selfish element. His mind annexes truth to itself, and not itself to truth. It considers truth as a kind of property; it wants the pride of making it its own; it treats it as an article of mental success, it does not reverence truth as an object, but appropriates it as a thing; it loves it as its own creation, and as the reflection of itself and its labours. . . . Not as the function of his own activities, the triumph of his own penetration, the offspring of his mind, not in the subterranean regions, where nature's fallen machinery and emulous exertion is at work, and the begrimed intellect labours in its own smoke, and exults in its difficulties, does the disciple of Christ search for truth. He searches and he penetrates, but not in this way. Truth penetrates into him, rather than he into Truth; Truth finds him out, not he It. He looks out for Its approach, waits for It, prepares himself for Its reception. He knows the signs of Its approach, and can tell Its features through the distance; he is alive to the slightest



stir of the air, to a whisper, to a breath. But he looks on It all the while as something without himself, as something to advance and act upon him. Upon all his activities sits an awful passiveness, and the mind adores with pure devotion an Object above itself.¹

What hope would there not be for the thinkers, seekers, and teachers of our time, what a thawing of the chilling frosts that lead to doubts of the intellect and coldness of the heart, if we could get all to unite in Mozley's prayer, that follows the sentences quoted, and with which we close our remarks on this subject!—

'Oh! Image Omnipotent, Eternal Pattern, fain would I love while I secretly dread Thee. Thou art that Mould that makest Thy slow, irresistible course through the world that Thou hast formed. Thou didst work at the beginning, and Thou workest hitherto. To Thee all souls, all reasons bow; the world is clay before Thy path; man awaits his fashioning from Thee, his change, his renovation; Thou informest and fashionest all minds that love Thee. . . . Come down upon me, and be my living Mould. Yet not without some tender condescension, some mercy and unutterable love, impress Thy awful stamp upon my poor and trembling being. I am weak, and Thou art mighty; I am small, and Thou art infinite. Crush me not by Thy force, Thy magnitude divine, but come in gentleness, in pity. . . . "In all ages Thou enterest into holy souls and makest them friends of God." Thou hast appeared on earth, and man has seen Thee in visible form; and we know that Thou art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Door and the Shepherd; Thy sheep hear Thy voice, and Thou gently ledest them, and carriest them in Thine arms. Thou didst suffer for them; and now, being made higher than the heavens, intercedest for them; an High Priest that art touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Jesus Christ our Lord.'

If only those who feel the chill of suspicion creeping over them, could join in the words of this prayer—words so touching, so tender, and so true—there would be little fear of their ever reaching the 'sunless gulf of doubt.'

¹ Mozley's 'Essays,' vol. ii., 'Blanco White.'

CHAPTER IV.

*'RATIONAL' SCEPTICISM: MR. J. S. MILL—
MISS H. MARTINEAU.*

'Human reason is like a drunken man on horseback ; set it up on one side and it tumbles over on the other.'—LUTHER.

'Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.'—ST. PAUL.

'Scepticism means not intellectual doubt alone, but moral doubt.'—CARLYLE.

'The powers of pain and wrong,
Immeasurably strong,
Assail our souls, and chill with common doubt
Clear brain and heart devout.'

MORRIS.

A LIVING poet, in language at once beautiful and suggestive, reminds us that when truth is 'embodied in a tale,' it may gain admission into hearts closed against wisdom in more abstract dress. There is much truth as well as beauty in this thought. Not only 'lowly doors,' but nearly all doors are open to truth embodied in the lessons of a life. Taking advantage, then, of this almost universal taste, we shall try to present 'Rational Scepticism' as this theory of life has been illustrated in the lives of two gifted workers who have recently passed away. These lives have no connection with each other beyond this, that they both belong to much the same period and in their relation to religion were remarkably similar. We refer to the lives of Mr. J. S. Mill and Miss H. Martineau.

Both began and ended life about the same time ;¹ both occupied much the same intellectual relation at last to Christianity ; both lived lives of great intellectual activity, and both held much the same moral theory of life ; both have left behind them autobiographies, in which, with great frankness, they have given us their opinions about religion, and their experience of Scepticism ; both lived lives in many respects worthy of honour, and both considered life better without the hopes and faith of the Christian. From a study of these lives, and of their thoughts, especially about Christianity, we may derive some benefit. Are they beacon-lights warning of the dangers of Scepticism, or are they proofs that life is a nobler and richer thing to the Rational Sceptic than it is to the Christian ? Our answer to these and such like questions, will appear in what follows.

The man or woman who can deliberately sit down to write his or her own life-history must, as it appears to us, have a considerable amount of something akin to self-complacency in his or her character. The writer of such a history must not only have a high estimate of the importance of the period so dealt with, but also, and we think chiefly, a deep sense of his or her own personal importance. Nor can we persuade ourselves that it would be possible for any man or woman of the noblest type of human character to attempt such a work. There are, indeed critics so desperately anxious to prove that Moses wrote every sentence of the Pentateuch, that they are willing to admit that he called himself the meekest man on earth ! Why, they argue, should either man or woman be unwilling to tell the honest truth about any person or thing ? True indeed ; yet only men and women who hold a high opinion of their own essential worth, and of the prominence due to them in the world, will ever deliberately write the story of their own lives. That both Mr. Mill and Miss Martineau have succeeded in giving a fairly truthful, and for the matter of that, impartial

¹ Mr. Mill was born in 1806, Miss Martineau in 1802. She outlived him, but practically their lives cover the same period.

estimate of themselves, we do not doubt ; that they should ever have resolved to write their own lives, and that through long years they should have held to, and carried out, such a resolution, must ever appear proof positive to the present writer that they are gifted with a large share of self-esteem, not to say self-assertion ! Her admiring biographer, Mrs. Chapman, speaks of Miss Martineau as the 'greatest Englishwoman.' We cannot admit the accuracy of such a classification. That both of these writers were great, we confess ; their lives were crowded with useful deeds, but the epithet 'greatest,' for many days to come, will not be given either to writers that reject Christianity as a superstition, or that write their own autobiography.

We shall first give a brief outline of the spiritual history of these two Sceptics, and then endeavour, as best we can, to point out the lessons to be gathered from their opinions and life.

No man, however gifted, or however great, can detach himself from his surroundings ; it may, even with truth, be said, the greater the man, the more does he belong to his age, and represent its character and tendency ; only One Great Being has appeared in the world, the 'Son of Humanity,' belonging to no age of the world's history. At all events, no one can ever hope to do justice to the religious opinions of Mr. Mill, who does not study the conditions under which he was trained. It is a disputed point whether great men owe most to their fathers or mothers ;¹ Mr. Mill's mother seems to have ceased to have any connection with him, if she ever had any beyond that of mother or nurse, when he was from three to five years of age. Attempts have been made to trace back certain ele-

¹ The relation of sex to heredity is a subject not yet fully understood- 'Mr. Galton's first inquiries concerning hereditary genius led him to the conclusion that, contrary to common opinion, the female influence was inferior to the male in transmitting ability ; but when he came to revise his data more closely, he saw reason to conclude that the influence of females is but little inferior to that of males in such transmission.'—*Dr. Maudsley*.

ments in his character to his grandmother, but with these we do not concern ourselves. John Stuart Mill is, in a most remarkable and pronounced manner, the child of James Mill, the historian of India ; to this man he owes most of his thoughts and feelings about religion—we may add, his very prejudices and his strong likes and dislikes. Of his mother Mr. Mill has not a word to say ; strange to say, the eloquent vindicator of woman, the man who could write so strongly about her position and subjection, has not a sympathetic word to say about this woman. Hers must have been a life full of anxiety and care ; about that anxiety her son says nothing, of that motherly care we learn only as by accident. This man, who, in later years, almost idolized his own wife, seems to have no sympathy at all with the woman to whom he owed his earthly existence. Much the same remark must be made about his relation to his brothers and sisters. Incidentally, we learn a little about them, but of *home life*, in any proper sense of these words, there is no trace in the record of his early years. Our attention is exclusively directed to the father and the son ; these were all-in-all to each other. For John Stuart Mill the father lived, and to his training and development he bent all the energies of his gifted, if somewhat hard and narrow, mind. And for many years the son was intellectually and morally the echo of his father ; to the very last he was in matters spiritual the child of James Mill.

The elder Mill was trained for the ministry of the Church of Scotland, and when he came to London was a licentiate of that communion. He belonged, Professor Bain tells us, rather to the 'moderate' than to the 'Evangelical party.' This may be assumed from the tone of his thought and the manner of his life. The tradition is, according to Bain, that Bentham was the first to lead the elder Mill away from Christianity. Very likely the moralist had something to do with the development of Mill's opinions, but there were other and deeper influences at work. So far as we can gather from the son, his father never really understood Christianity. He must have been, even in

his orthodox days, only a kind of Deist in religion. Nor did he long find a halting-place in Deism ; ultimately he reached the conclusion that about these high matters nothing whatever can be known—in fact, became a kind of Agnostic. A ‘Dogmatic Atheist’ he never was, and this position he believed to be absurd and untenable. The Christianity rejected by the elder Mill was a kind of high Calvinism of the fatalistic type, and he rejected this, the younger Mill is careful to remind us, on moral grounds.¹ He considered the Christian (?) idea of God the *ne plus ultra* of wickedness. According to this idea, God first made a hell, then created the human race with the infallible foreknowledge, *and therefore intention*, that the great majority of them should be tormented in this hell for ever and ever. He taught his son that the popular religion was just the mythology, so to speak, Christianity, to be treated with much the same consideration given to the mythology of the Greeks and Romans ; that nothing whatever could be known regarding the origin of the universe, and that man’s duty was to give himself no concern about such questions ; that as for Christians, they held opinions and accepted beliefs utterly immoral in character and tendency. He seems to have looked with more kindly eye on the doctrines of the Manichæan, and often wondered that these found no modern defenders and interpreters. As to human life, it was a poor thing at best, and after the first bloom and freshness of youth are over, there is little in it to be desired. The character of the elder Mill, says his son, was a mixture of the Stoic, the Epicurean, and the Cynic ; he was strictly moral and sternly upright, but had no tenderness of heart.

¹ It may save needless reference if we say, once for all, that for the facts about Mr. Mill we are indebted chiefly to his ‘Autobiography.’ A few incidents of the elder Mill’s life are taken from Professor Bain’s articles in ‘Mind’ (1879, 1880). Mr. Mill’s opinions about religion we take from the ‘Autobiography’ and the ‘Essays on Religion,’ published after his death. The opinions and history of Miss Martineau are taken from her ‘Autobiography,’ and the companion volume by the admiring editor, Mrs. Chapman.

Such was the spiritual 'environment' of the younger Mill. He grew up, as he himself tells us, without any religion. He could not reject Christianity, for he never accepted its teachings; we may add, he never really understood them. The friends and associates of his early life were not likely to help him much here. We read of intercourse, indeed, of a kind, with men such as Maurice, Sterling, Thirlwall, afterwards Bishop of St. David's, and others, but under conditions unfavourable to any religious conversation or real interchange of thought. Of the character and ability of Maurice he held a high estimate, but such a man could never have really influenced him. He looked upon Maurice's attempt to make the Thirty-nine Articles a kind of epitome of all truth, as a species of Jesuitical casuistry. Carlyle, too, he knew, and in later days much valued. At the time to which we refer, his father looked with contempt on what he called the sentimental ravings of the sage of Chelsea, and he himself would hardly be able to understand such writing. So far as intercourse with Christians is concerned, so far as Christian training went, he was brought up as much a Pagan as if he had lived before the Christian era. Of course there were the influences of Christian thought in the literature of his time, but his father's teaching would, at first, most effectually counteract these; around him, as his associates, as the 'set' to which he belonged, and with whom he discussed questions on equal terms, were a band of thinkers as sceptical as himself, some of them as bitterly opposed to Christianity as was his father. Moreover, the elder Mill taught him to keep his thoughts about religion to himself, on the ground that by speaking too freely he might hinder his promotion in this world.

Such were the early life and spiritual position of Mr. Mill. There is no evidence that he ever thoroughly studied for himself, and that under conditions favourable to success, the religion of Jesus Christ. He read, but can hardly be said to have deeply studied, the Old and New Testaments. He was surprised to find *love* in the Mosaic code, under conditions that appeared to him low and even barbarous. There is evidence

in his various writings of some vague acquaintance with the Gospels and Epistles, evidence also of no really profound study of the New Testament. We find opinions expressed about both Gospels and Epistles that are very crude and uncritical. If any unfortunate critic had dealt with his philosophy as he has everywhere dealt with the Record of God's redeeming purpose, we can imagine what scathing exposure there would have been, by Mill, of his rashness and incompetency. This remark has a wider application; our 'Rational Sceptics' are familiar with the faintest shades of meaning in Plato, Aristotle, or Hume; they bend their spacious brows with intense interest over the records of lowest life among savages; they even devote years of patient and laborious study to the lives of the ants and the bees; when they come to the most wonderful Life ever seen in this world of ours, they are content with the most superficial knowledge.

So far as we have been able to gather, Mr. Mill never really shook himself free from the influence of his father in his study of Christianity. In later years, and after his father's death, he expressed himself with the utmost freedom on philosophy and political economy, often contradicting the opinions of his father, and insisting on taking an independent course. In religion, he remained to the close of life simply a disciple of the elder Mill; he accepted his father's views of Christianity, and regarded the popular beliefs with feelings of pity mixed with contempt.

Scattered through his works there are allusions to Revealed Religion, which are often mere accommodations to prevailing beliefs, and of which no account need be taken.¹ But in his work on 'Liberty,' in his 'Utilitarianism,' above all, in the 'Essays on Religion,' published after his death, we find his real

¹ The same remark may be made respecting the early writings of Mr. Herbert Spencer. Let anyone compare for example his 'Social Statics,' with his 'Data of Ethics,' or other recent productions, and the change will be instructive; another indication, this, of the change that has come over the public mind within the last twenty years.

opinions and feelings ; these are decidedly opposed to the Christianity of the New Testament — sometimes almost grotesque perversions of the same. According to him, the one essential Christian virtue is passive ‘obedience,’ the one essential vice ‘self-will.’ Did it never occur to him to read this in the light of the Christian idea of God ? Mill brings with him his own ideas about ‘Nature’ and about God, reads these into the Christian Records, and then finds there the will of a Being of limited power, and but imperfect goodness, perhaps even a vindictive Being ! Natural enough, under such circumstances, to object to ‘obedience’ and to glorify ‘self-will ;’ equally natural for the Christian to say that Mill’s picture does not correspond to the reality. Our God is the God and Father of Jesus Christ. When we study carefully his latest and most matured utterances, we are convinced that he never went beyond the lessons taught him by his father. The God of the younger, as of the elder, Mill, is the God of a sort of ultra-Calvinism, the Calvinism of the ignorant rather than of the theologians. There is the same vehement dislike wherever nature is spoken about ; nature is herself bad, and cannot therefore be the work of a good Creator. She maliciously destroys life, and that in the most wanton manner ; ‘gravitation need not cease when you go by,’ indeed, but nature ought not to pelt you with stones ! At bottom, Mill’s view of life leaves no place for real freedom in man, and the nature which he would acknowledge as from a good and powerful Creator, would be a nature in which there were no uniformities and no laws. Like his father, he accepts Dualism as, on the whole, a more consistent creed, and wonders why it has no abler advocates in our time. He does not seem to see that if there are ninety-and-nine objections to the Christian, there would be all these and one or two more to the Dualist’s creed. Equally unsatisfactory, as we shall show later on, is his view of Christ. Mill, like other great men, cannot help almost worshipping the ‘Prophet of Nazareth.’ He refuses to believe that the Apostles created such an Ideal—they were incapable of such work ; hence the

records must be accepted as in the main trustworthy, only there must be no miracles allowed! No more satisfactory is his dealing with the question of immortality. It is not difficult for him to weaken the force of arguments common to Socrates and Christianity. There is evidence that, after the death of his much-beloved wife, he looked with more favour on the *hope* of immortality. At all times life appeared to him, as to his father, a 'poor thing at best;' after this bereavement, it was a cruel and mocking thing as well. There is no evidence of his having studied immortality in the light of Christ's resurrection. The distinctive immortality of the New Testament, that is, life in Christ,¹ his bias against miracle would not allow him to entertain.

Looking then at the whole spiritual history of Mr. Mill, we can find nothing calculated to recommend to us what is called 'Rational Scepticism.' His was, in many respects, a noble and worthy life. One of his admirers seems to think that, but for his great mind and deep thought, he might have been a good Christian. The sneer is patent enough, but not the wisdom of such a sentiment.² No one will say that Mill's view of Christianity was possible to a truly great soul, applying itself bravely and patiently to a study of the Christian records. Had he been a true Christian, he would have been, as it seems to us, a clearer thinker and a greater man. We yield to none in our admiration of many features in his character. A great statesman, himself a Christian, is said to have called him the 'conscience of the House of Commons.' Mill had a true instinct of justice, and no struggling cause, unless indeed it were *Christianity*, could appeal to him in vain. In his public life he acted on principles higher far than many Christians care, at all times, to

¹ 'The distinctively Christian immortality—life in Christ.'—*Dr. Matheson*, 'Baird Lecture for 1881,' p. 168, note.

² 'Forgetful of the splendid example shown by *intellectual giants* like Newton and Faraday,' as Professors Stewart and Tait say in their preface to the first edition of the 'Unseen Universe.' Christianity has no need to be ashamed of the *intellectual* ability of many of its representatives.

acknowledge. He refused to adopt expedients too common at election contests when he sought to enter Parliament.¹ He stood up for what he considered right, however unpopular his conduct might appear. In private life he was, we believe, honourable, pure, and unselfish. Christians may do justice to these elements in his character, however much they may feel the unsatisfactory nature of his philosophy of life; they may also believe that one but little in the Kingdom of Heaven, if true to the spirit of Jesus, may be far greater than Mill.

Running through his character there is, in our opinion, a spirit of intense self-complacency, from which the humility taught in the school of Christ might have saved him. He cannot help feeling that he and his 'set' do not belong to the common herd; they must enter society as 'apostles,' or not at all. They felt themselves superior to the ordinary motives, aims, and superstitions of Christianity. Mill, in his heart, despises those who accept Christianity, and this, too, because of his ignorance of its genuine character. Professor Bain blames Mill for not seeing that his father's antipathy to Christianity was ultimately *intellectual*, rather than moral, as he considered; so may we urge that if John Stuart Mill had come to the 'Prophet of Nazareth' with keener intellectual vision, he might have seen that a Being so exalted was his Master, and that the supreme devotion of heart, and soul, and life, was more truly manly than was his own position.

¹ 'It was, and is, my fixed conviction, that a candidate ought not to incur one farthing of expense for undertaking a public duty. . . . What has to be done by the supporters of each candidate in order to bring his claims before the constituency, should be done by unpaid agency, or by voluntary subscription. . . . That the expense, or any part of it, should fall on the candidate, is fundamentally wrong, because it amounts in reality to buying his seat. Even on the most favourable supposition as to the mode in which the money is expended, there is a legitimate suspicion that anyone who gives money for leave to undertake a public trust has other than public ends to promote by it,' etc. If such views were generally held, what gross evils might at once be swept away from electoral contests! (See ('Autobiography,' p. 280.)

That Mill was never really satisfied with his own theory of the universe is evident to the diligent student of his later writings. There is much that is sad about the history of his spiritual experiences. He tells of a crisis that came to him after he reached manhood, and of an 'infinite sadness' (to use words not his), that at intervals in his life ever returned to him. Professor Bain attributes this to physical and intellectual exhaustion, consequent on the unnatural amount of work his father made him go through in youth. Doubtless he was overworked in every sense; the amount of reading he accomplished seems almost fabulous.¹ But Mill himself seems to us to suggest the truer explanation, when he likens this experience of his to a Methodist's feeling *under conviction of sin*. Of course, Mill means to insinuate by this that such experiences are not to be accounted for on Methodist principles; here, however, *John Wesley* is a truer guide than John Stuart Mill. There is something intensely pathetic in Mill's account of himself at this period. We cannot but wish that some wise and good man had done for Mill, at such a time, what Eli did for Samuel of old. If only some one could have persuaded him to come to Christ with his trouble, as did Rabbi Nicodemus, what a change there might have been in his whole life!

As it was, he was dissatisfied with life, and felt that it had no deep and true moral meaning. The narrow, and narrowing, philosophy of his father had utterly broken down. Ultimately he found some relief in the poetry of Wordsworth (which his father had despised), and in trying to live for others—to seek, not individual happiness, but the greatest good of others. Speaking generally, he adopted the 'religion of humanity' as his moral guide in life. At intervals in his after-life this disquiet returned, and all through life he had to battle with the feeling that nothing was 'worth while.'²

¹ He began to study Greek when he was three years of age, and before he arrived at the ripe age of eight years, had mastered (?) much of Plato!

² Thereby showing that Mill never felt life worth living, as seen from the only standpoint he considered rational. Life to the Rational Sceptic can

No Christian, at least, can admire the 'religion' of his later life. He found in the memory of his departed wife all that he had of a religion. To this influence he yielded himself with something like superstitious ardour, and his last writings show traces, as it seems to us, of its enervating influence. Many will see in all this the natural outcome of that 'rational Scepticism' which Mill accepted. The soul of man 'thirsts for the living God,' and this thirst can never be really quenched by any idolatry of departed excellence. Deeper students of religion than Mill, or any of his school, remind us that religion is one of the most important factors in the complex life of humanity. Man may by force of will, and by the circumstances of his life, detach himself from worship—may even regard the spiritual cravings of his nature as the offspring of superstition and priest-craft; he cannot get rid of the fact that he is a religious being. As Fairbairn has well and beautifully said, and not without reference to this very experience of Mill's, 'Man gets into religion as into other natural things—the use of his senses, his mother-tongue—without conscious effort; but to get out of it he has to use art, to reason himself into an attitude of watchful antagonism at once to the tendencies and action of his own nature, and to ancient and general beliefs. No man is an Atheist by birth, only by artifice and education; and art when it vanquishes nature is not always a victor. The world has before now seen a mind which had cast out religion as worship of God, introduce a religion which worshipped man, or rather idolized the memory of a woman.'¹ To a Theist, Mill's experience gives one more proof of how impossible it is for the human heart to rest satisfied with any religion, which does not acknowledge God as Creator and Father of Men.

We have confessed that there was much that was noble in the character of Mill; we cannot say that he shows any nobility of mind in his relation to the religion of Jesus Christ. He was brought up to believe that the doctrines of Christianity were

never be a thing of beauty and joy, such as, for instance, it was to the early Christians even in days of fiercest persecution.

¹ 'Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History,' p. 304.

simply a kind of mythology ; in this belief he lived and died. He had presented to him in youth and early manhood a picture of Christianity and the Christian philosophy of life, which no more corresponded to the reality than the first works of some child-artist correspond to the finished works of a master: *there is no evidence that he ever sought to see Christianity as it is, as we find it in its authoritative records.* Mill lived at a time when the early records of Christianity and the dogmatic teachings of creeds were being subjected to the keenest scrutiny, when fresh works on these subjects were being issued from the press every year ; there is no evidence that he took any special interest in such critical studies. He taught that if we are to deal justly with any doctrine or any theory, we must deal with it in its best form, and as presented by its wisest advocates ; the doctrines of Christianity criticized by him are those put forth by its crudest advocates and teachers, and his criticisms give no evidence of deep study and knowledge at first-hand.

Taking all these things into account, and with the utmost desire to do justice to all that was best in Mill's character, we cannot but conclude that 'Rational Scepticism,' as illustrated by and embodied in the tale of his life, is anything but a true and safe guide for man. Mill would have been far more truly 'rational' had he accepted the 'Prophet of Nazareth' not only as a 'unique' moral Teacher, but as the Son of God. A truly rational faith and hope in Christ would have made life richer and better for him—would also have made his moral influence more beneficial, and his work more enduring.

Miss Martineau, unlike Mr. Mill, was trained and developed under Christian influences. The creed of her fathers was certainly not one of the most orthodox, nor can we refuse to agree with her when she affirms that it lacked some of the most essential elements of the full-orbed Christian faith. The faith of her father, mother, and friends, was the faith of Unitarianism as that existed at the close of the eighteenth century. Miss Martineau herself describes this form of belief, and no one will say that her description lacks energy and point. Referring to her ancestors and their beliefs, and contrasting the Calvinism

of the early Martineaus with the Unitarianism in which she was nurtured, she says : 'The first Martineaus that we know of were expatriated Huguenots, who came over from Normandy on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. They were, of course, Calvinists—so fully admitting the Christian religion to be a scheme of redemption as to deserve, without limitation or perversion, the title of Christians.¹ But their descendants passed by degrees, with the congregations to which they belonged, out of Calvinism² into the pseudo-Christianity of Arianism first, and then of Unitarianism, under the guidance of pastors whose natural sense revolted from the essential points of the Christian doctrine, while they had not learning enough—Biblical, ecclesiastical, historical, or philosophical—to discover that what they gave up was truly essential, and that the name of Christianity was a mere sham then applied to what they retained.' Whether this be a correct estimate of the matter in dispute, or whether Miss Martineau's distinguished brother³ would be disposed to accept it, we need not stop to inquire ; suffice it to say that these were the spiritual 'environments' of her early life. Mill's early life was spent under either non-Christian or anti-Christian influences ; Miss Martineau's among men and women who accepted or professed the Unitarian creed.

About her childhood we need say little. That she must have been a strange child she herself honestly confesses, and every page of her history gives ample proof of this fact. She was a source of much trouble and anxiety to her parents by her fears and forebodings of evil. Her strange temperament, her religious beliefs, her fears and fancies, would exert considerable influence over her early spiritual history, but on

¹ Clearly Miss Martineau would deny the title of Christian to any who refuse to accept *Christ as Redeemer*, in the truly Biblical sense of that term ! Here she is right !

² This is only part of a movement common to all the Churches adopting the 'Theology of the Confession of Faith.' In Geneva, in England, in Scotland, and in Ireland, partly in America also, we see the same revolution. How to account for this is not so easy. Dr. Fairbairn discusses the question in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1873.

³ Dr. James Martineau.

these we shall not dwell. We gather that she was a devoted student, in early life, of the Unitarian version of the Scriptures, and that Belsham's 'Expositions of the Epistles' were her chief mental food. Under these instructors she made marked progress. She diligently studied the Old and New Testaments; she tried to construct 'harmonies' of the Gospel records; she exercised a most careful scrutiny over the workings of her mind, and tormented herself much with doubts and fears about her spiritual health. Thanks to her Unitarian parents and teachers, she says, she never had any dread of future punishment, nor did she believe in the existence of any devil. Up to the age of twenty her religious beliefs amounted to the following: She believed in a God, 'milder and more passionless than the God of the orthodox'—in fact, hers was a kind of Deism of the more colourless sort; in a Christ as the 'purest of all beings under God,' and in His sufferings as a kind of sublime martyrdom; the Holy Ghost was to her a 'mere fiction,' she 'took all the miracles for facts, and contrived to worship the letter of the Scriptures long after she had, as desired by her masters, given up portions as "spurious interpolations" and so forth;' she believed in the future life as a 'continuation of the present,' and when she could not accept both the immortality of the soul and St. Paul's doctrine of the resurrection, she strictly held to the former.' By means of these and other similar beliefs, by the help of the public services and devotional literature within her reach, she contrived to find in religion her best resource, and seems to have enjoyed this part of her life more, perhaps, than any other.

As she grew older she resolved her doubts about the Divine Government by accepting the doctrine of 'Necessity,' after this she ceased to pray as she had done before. For a time she asked God for spiritual blessings, but even this she abandoned. The petition for daily bread in the Lord's Prayer caused her much perturbation; but gradually she came to see that this prayer was made up of 'older than Christian materials,' and therefore not the model prayer for advanced Christian thinkers. Finally, she gave up prayer altogether as either childish or

meaningless, or both. Long after abandoning prayer, she held to some sort of belief in future life, her sick-room essays, as she remarks, being written from this standpoint. At that time she was unable to believe in the utter extinction of life after death. During a long period of sickness she worked at this problem. Many events combined to force it upon her notice, such as the death of many intimate friends, her own feebleness and, as it then appeared, her approaching end, visits from and conversations with many distinguished persons who did not accept the Christian religion, but who yet seemed to be more truly Christian in spirit than any,—these and such-like circumstances led her to a decided ‘advance’ in her spiritual life. From this time forward she neither desired nor expected any future life for herself or anybody else. Unlike Mill, she seems to have enjoyed life for its own sake, and thought it a good thing apart from any future ; yet, like him, she considered its sudden and entire extinction no evil to be dreaded.

The final setting of her religious beliefs dates from her acquaintance with Mr. Atkinson. According to her own account, this gentleman opened up to her a new intellectual, moral, and spiritual world, and gave her a radically different view of life. Mr. Atkinson, if we may judge from all we know, was simply an Agnostic of the extremest type.¹ Long before Agnosticism, thanks to certain distinguished masters in physical science, became a household word amongst us, Miss Martineau and her teacher accepted and professed this dreary creed. If any proof be needed that this is the correct reading of the facts, let it be found in Mr. Atkinson’s jubilation over the more recent teachings of Professor Tyndall and others ; he sees

¹ Very different estimates are given of the intellectual character of this gentleman. Miss Martineau rated him among the noblest of men ; her brother James gives him a very humble place, but probably his intense dislike influenced his judgment. Professor Blackie, in his ‘*Natural History of Atheism*,’ gives some account of Mr. Atkinson’s opinion. He says, ‘His words represent fairly enough that oblique vision and distorted portraiture of Christian doctrine and morals, which, seasoned up with the favourite scientific phraseology of the hour, is cooked up into so many shallow shapes of more or less distinctly enunciated Atheism,’ p. 241.

in the doctrines of Maudsley, and in the conclusions of Tyndall and Spencer, the full and perfect embodiment of the ideas expressed by the 'Atkinson Letters.' Miss Martineau says they never were Atheists in the sense of denying philosophically a 'First Cause;' she saw and frankly admitted that, in the popular sense, their doctrines would be considered Atheistic. She and her guide were simply thoroughgoing Materialists: they believed in no immortality, save that of the race, in no life beyond death, save whatever of good lives after them in the 'words they have spoken and the deeds they have done.' As to her own hopes, feelings, thoughts, and fancies, she is frank almost to a fault. Mill, profiting by, or unconsciously influenced by, the teaching of his father, concealed to the last his personal beliefs and expectations.¹ No such reserve influenced this 'advanced thinker.' Christians wondered how she could either enjoy life, or look forward with any satisfaction to death; they wanted to know what were her thoughts, feelings, and desires, and she told them all her heart. That *all* is nothing. Believing in no future life,—believing that when the brain ceases to throb, and the heart to beat, we cease to be—believing that it is simply another form of selfishness and self-love either to desire or to expect any further or future life,—believing that all things are as they are because of laws that are beneficent in tendency—believing, also, that the truest life is to fall in with the order everywhere seen in this world of ours, she was calm and resigned, without either hope or fear. Miss Martineau, when she made this confession of her *no faith*, expected soon to die. She did not die at that time, lived for nearly a quarter of a century, saw many days, and much enjoyed life; she never changed her beliefs after this, nor did she retract anything she had uttered. She found it essential to her well-being to live for others, and she so lived, and toiled and loved, that after her death Florence Nightingale believed she had gone to the 'Father's House,' to 'our Lord and her Lord!' So, evidently, thought the clergyman who read the service and gave the

¹ He left his most 'mature' thoughts on religion to be published after his death.

address at her grave, for he spoke of her as a 'servant of God and of righteousness.'

And yet we cannot call a life like hers the noblest type of life, nor did she give to others the noblest and best pattern of true womanhood. We have no wish to detract in the very least degree from her confessedly great merits, nor would we willingly say a word against a woman who lived so far above the lives of many of her sisters,—even those who think they know more than she knew of the secret of true living.¹ But truth is truth, and when that truth is fully told, it must be confessed that, like Mr. Mill, Miss Martineau never knew, and, instead of describing, often grossly caricatured, the religion of Jesus Christ. No true and just criticism of her religious opinions can afford to overlook the influences under which she grew up, and the early bias she received against Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Mill was taught to look upon religion as a kind of superstition; Miss Martineau was taught to overlook, ignore, and deny, some of the most vital teachings of Christianity. She herself sees this at times, and denies the right of the Unitarians to appropriate 'all the Christian promises, without troubling themselves with the clearly specified condition of faith in Christ as a Redeemer.' She never sees, and therefore does not acknowledge, what is very manifest to any Christian student of her autobiography—viz., *that she never really understood Christianity*. Mr. Mill always surveys religion from an outside standpoint; Miss Martineau claims to look at it *from within*, and to speak of it from the standpoint of one who has had a living experience of its meaning. This is, even on her own showing, a delusion of the imagination; for she never accepted, even by the intellect, the distinctive truths of the Gospel. How can anyone, to whom the Holy Spirit is a 'mere fiction,' pretend to expound Christianity? How can one who regards Christ as one of the purest of *created beings*, and His death merely a sublime martyrdom, presume to tell what true Christianity is? We must not

¹ 'Unquestionably she was a lady, not only of rare intellectual gifts, but with a moral nature of the most delicate sensibility.'—*Blackie*.

allow Miss Martineau to ridicule Unitarianism, deny its right to the title of Christian, and then, from the standpoint of the most barren type of eighteenth-century Unitarianism, profess to explain to others the mysteries of the Christian faith. Before anyone can pretend to teach another the truths of Christianity, he or she must be 'born of the Spirit.' As well ask from Nicodemus before his visit to Jesus by night, or from Saul of Tarsus while yet a fierce and bigoted persecutor, an exposition of Christianity, as expect that Harriet Martineau ever could *from within*, as she was wont to say, tell the true meaning of the religion of Jesus.

We are compelled also to assert that Miss Martineau misunderstood, and even grossly misrepresented, the Christian faith. Like Mr. Mill, she believed the 'essential doctrines' of Christianity to be that God was the 'predestinator of man to sin and perdition, and Christ, their rescuer from that doom.' She never accepted any such belief; Unitarianism saved her from this, but nothing could 'save her from the perplexity of finding so much of indisputable statement of those doctrines in the New Testament.' Again, we are told by her about that 'atmosphere of selfishness which is the very life of Christian doctrine, and of every theological scheme.' These and similar sentiments scattered through her writings reveal her conception of the doctrines of Christianity. At bottom, her view is that so much abhorred by the elder Mill, and which the younger Mill never ceased to consider the correct one. We do not say that either Mr. Mill or Miss Martineau was altogether responsible for this perverted doctrine; there must have been, in the unguarded utterances of its preachers, and in the conversations of its representatives, much that gave colouring of truth to such conceptions. It is a common remark that the Christian is the world's Bible; to a much greater extent than many of us are willing to allow, this is true. Even among the more intelligent opponents of the Gospel, how many are there whose opposition is based on an impartial and thorough study of the evidence? They listen to popular discourses and representations of comparatively ignorant thinkers; they have a keen eye for exagger-

ated doctrinal statements, they treasure up utterances of religious experience of the extreme order ;—then, combining these and other ideas together, they hold them up before their eyes, and through them read the plain teachings of the New Testament. Popular theology must ever be tainted with exaggeration and over-statement. But what are we to say of either the intellectual capacity, or the moral candour, of those who say of such miserable travesties of Christianity that they are its essential doctrines? Is it an essential doctrine of the New Testament that Father and Son are at variance? Miss Martineau reads the New Testament through the spectacles supplied by her early Unitarian guides, forgetting that she herself has denounced their intellectual and spiritual incompetency. It may be replied that she would often hear Christians talk as if Jesus had come to save men from a hell to which God had predestined them, as if God were all justice and Jesus all mercy, or that the Pauline teaching would often be interpreted in the way she suggests ; what we complain of is that Miss Martineau, with the New Testament in her hand, should have considered it either candid or critical to give forth such crude opinions. The essential purpose of God cannot either be opposed or reversed by Him Who is its outward manifestation and expression. The love of God is revealed to us in and through Jesus Christ, and one of the most familiar texts in the whole Book reminds us that salvation comes to man *from God's love to the world*.¹ Moreover, we may so dwell upon the remedial character of the Gospel dispensation as to forget that the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' could hardly be a *remedy for merely unforeseen defects in the work of the Creator* ; such transparent absurdities should not be given forth by these apostles of culture as if they were a new revelation. The Mills and the Martineaus must neither be permitted to interpret Christianity to us from the standpoint of Deism, nor from that of moral antipathy.

The sneers met with from time to time in Miss Martineau's autobiography, the evident bias against Christianity, and the

¹ John iii. 16.

strong expressions of haughty superiority to the popular faith, all alike proclaim her unfitness for the task of expounding Christianity to the world. One who holds the essence of the Christian hope and expectation to be 'selfishness,' must be either strangely constituted, or much mistaken as to its real character. We prefer to accept the opinions of men like Professor Huxley, and women like 'George Eliot;' these object not so much to the moral character, but to, what they consider, the lack of intellectual evidence for this faith.¹ What shall we say of the intellectual and moral capacity of one who thinks the religion of Jesus selfishness? Its rewards, rightly understood, *can only be desired and appreciated by an unselfish nature*. What possible attraction could there be for a selfish man or woman in the Christian idea of heaven, *i.e.*, to 'be with Christ,' to be 'like Christ?' The Christian standard of duty, and the intrinsically Christian motives, only truly spiritual natures can ever appreciate; hence, the doctrine, meeting us at the very threshold of Christianity, of the necessity for a new heart and a right spirit. Miss Martineau will have against her here the voice of the ages. Better say, with the eloquent Lecky, 'By the confession of all parties the Christian religion was designed to be a religion of philanthropy, and love was represented as the distinctive test or characteristic of its true members. As a matter of fact, it has probably done more to quicken the affections of mankind, to promote piety, to create a pure and merciful ideal, than any other influence that has ever acted on the world.'² This will be held by all who have any real acquaintance with the religion of Jesus to be the truer view; in the presence and under the influence of true Christian doctrine and life, selfishness must disappear like ice before the rising sun.

Elsewhere, Miss Martineau shows her unfitness for giving a sober estimate by her expressions of vehement antagonism. She talks of Christianity as a 'monstrous superstition,' of her de-

¹ "Deism," she once said, "seems to me the most incoherent of all systems, but to Christianity I feel no objection but its want of evidence."—'The Moral Influence of George Eliot,' *Contemporary Review*, February, 1881.

² 'Rationalism in Europe,' vol. i., p. 326.

liverance from its galling bondage, and of finding herself a 'free rover on the broad and breezy common of the universe,' of Christians 'fiercely clinging to their man-God,' their arrogance and selfishness and the like. Sentiments like these, and they often appear in her writings on this subject, reveal the state of mind in which she approached Christianity. Perhaps such antagonism is not so much to be wondered at; earnest and energetic natures like hers cannot be neutral—they must either accept Christ with passionate devotion, or reject Him with vehement dislike.

Nevertheless, such methods of dealing with Christianity illustrate her unfitness to guide and instruct others; they also reveal a pride of heart which characterized Miss Martineau, with all her gentleness and nobility. We have complained of Mr. Mill's want of child-like humility, of his intense satisfaction with himself, and his assumed superiority; in Miss Martineau the same qualities appear.¹ This seems to us one of the defects of all character formed in the sceptical mould. Apart from the softening and spiritually energizing influences of Christianity, the highest type of character cannot be developed. Stoic calmness and robustness have their worth and their place in life; so must we offer our tribute of honour to men and women who have the courage to think for themselves and to act irrespective of the opposition of their fellows; none the less must we assert, that the highest character is not possible without faith in a living God, and without life under the quickening influence of the Powers of the world to come. Lofty self-sufficiency, haughty assumptions of superiority to the motives, aims, and life of Christians, may find favour in Agnostic circles; no one who has learned to reverence the 'meekness and gentleness of Christ,' or to find the highest ideal of life in the New Testament, can ever admire such a type of character.

We do not here discuss Miss Martineau's Agnostic theory of life; speaking generally, it may be regarded as simply one phase of extreme Materialism. What we are concerned to show

¹ See illustrations of this in her, often unfeeling, criticisms on the 'Great Men and Women' of her time.

is, that both Mr. Mill and Miss Martineau are beacons to warn, rather than lights to guide the wanderers in life. They leave footprints behind them, indeed, and they call loudly that their paths are better than the pathway of the Cross; they have tried to live without God and without hope in the world, and they are often held up as examples of how nobly life may be lived, without any aid from either the hopes or fears associated with the supernatural. That there was much in their lives and in their work worthy of admiration, we freely confess. They both tried to live for others, and to show how much may be done to make life better worth living. Yet there is much in their life-history that cannot be admired; especially their method of dealing with the religion of Jesus Christ is altogether to be condemned. They themselves were misguided, and certainly they have misled others. Grant that they were in the first case the victims of circumstance, of defective teaching and evil example; they manifested none of that peculiar force of character seen in those who rise above such influences, and who assert for themselves the privilege and the power to think according to the facts, and not according to the perversions of their guides. Both Mr. Mill and Miss Martineau, speak from first to last as if the caricatures of doctrine taught to and accepted by them were genuine Christianity; many of their definitions and expositions do not rise above the level of the Christianity taught by the most illiterate of Sceptics. What shall we say of one who thinks it fair to speak of the *God-man*, as a mere 'man-God?' This is Miss Martineau's highest wisdom on such themes!

Both these 'Rational Sceptics' seem to have accepted, as we have already remarked, a kind of popular mis-reading of ultra-Calvinism as the simple meaning of the New Testament; a reading of that theology which sets Christ in open antagonism with His Father, and which makes God, not a being to be loved, as the Father of Jesus, but a kind of demon to be hated and feared. What shall we say of the competency of such guides? Grant that both were trained under circumstances adverse to true knowledge and simple faith: Mr. Mill was strong enough to break through the narrow limits of his father's opinions in

philosophy and political economy, and Miss Martineau shows ability to criticize and to reject what she dislikes of her early creed ; why did they not honestly study the New Testament for themselves, instead of meekly accepting outrageous distortions of its meaning ? Here we have the outstanding fact in their life-history, that they never cared to rise above the merest commonplace in dealing with the deepest themes. Problems that had exercised the minds of the wisest and deepest thinkers of the world, themes that have engaged the thought of some of the noblest of the race, they dismiss with a haughty wave of the hand or a supercilious sneer. If this be the outcome of ' Rational Scepticism,' save us from such a philosophy of life ! The Greek particles, the peculiarity of style in the great writers of antiquity, the minutest detail of logic, and the smallest incident in the history of our Indian Empire, the Land Question at home, and the Slave Question abroad,—all the social and political controversies of the busy and exciting period through which they lived,—these are considered worthy of the most patient study and the most painstaking accuracy ; but the transcendent problems of God, Christ, life, and immortality,—these are unworthy of serious thought.

Both of them lived at a time when the foundations of the great deep of religious thought were being broken up, when methods of criticism of the most scientific order were being applied to the Sacred Books, and when from the busy press of Europe new readings of Christ's life-history, and new investigations of the early life of the Church, were constantly appearing. They do not appear to have given any special or profound attention to matters like these. All their references to the Sacred Books, and to the most exalted theses that can occupy the mind of men, are of the most superficial character ; they belong more to the Deistic age than to the nineteenth century in all such questions. Some one speaks of the essentially defective character of the great German poet, Goethe ; how he could live all through a period of intense political importance, and never manifest in his song a single pang of sympathy with the Fatherland ; so did these two ' Rational Sceptics' live through the

spiritually exciting period of their later life, and show very little real sympathy with the conflicts of their age. Mr. Hutton says of Goethe that he was 'the wisest man of modern days who ever lacked the wisdom of a child; the deepest who never knew what it was to kneel in the dust with bowed head and broken heart'; that 'adequate to himself' was written on that broad, calm forehead.¹ We have no desire to make comparisons that would be considered irrelevant, and yet the words may not inaptly be applied to Mr. Mill and Miss Martineau. If the truest greatness is possible to people so self-satisfied, we may call them truly great; and yet we instinctively feel that they lacked that true humility of spirit which alone entitles any mortal to the name 'great.'

Behind all these questions, too, there are others which demand attention. What about the influence of a creed like theirs on the people? It is quite true that unless we can demonstrate the *truth* of a religion, we do not, in the first instance, think much of its mere *utility*; but both Mr. Mill and Miss Martineau would have 'utility' applied as one of the principal tests of truth. Miss Martineau and her instructor, Mr. Atkinson, evidently looked forward to a kind of Golden Age as one of the results of a general adoption of their creed. Mr. Mill, less hopeful, and perhaps more sagacious, had but very humble expectations; hence his willingness to admit as a *possible hope* what Miss Martineau regarded as a degrading superstition. Strange as it may appear, the man had here a truer instinct than the *woman*; but in many respects Mill's intellect was the more feminine of the two.

For our part, we believe the general adoption of such beliefs as we have been describing would be nothing short of an awful calamity. It is at all times difficult to estimate the amount of influence exerted, even upon Atheists, by the faiths and hopes they have abandoned. When Strauss asks whether we are still *Christians*, Fairbairn not unfairly says he might as well ask whether we are still *Europeans*! Mr. Hutton reminds us that there is a thoroughly 'Atheistic way of shuddering over Atheism,

¹ Hutton's 'Essays, Theological and Literary,' vol. ii.

which is apt to express itself as if the spread of human disbelief would not only overcloud but *empty* heaven. . . . There is no tendency more mischievous in its effects than that which makes human belief in God the *first* regenerating power in human society, and God Himself the second; which makes God's blessing a consequence of man's confession, and which therefore limits that blessing to the narrow bounds of the confession. . . . We must grant the Atheist his unexplained impulses to good, the *implicit* God of his conscience, and show how he mutilates and dwarfs human nature by denying it all explained impulses to good, the explicit God of faith.¹ Far beyond the implicit faiths of even the most determined unbelievers, we must see and recognise the influence of the Christian *environments*. If Mr. Mill and Miss Martineau were unable to shake themselves free from the actual teachings and influences of their early life, if they could never rise above the dogmatic conceptions taught to them in childhood, how much less would they be able to shake themselves free from the Christian influences which, unconsciously to themselves, were moulding and shaping all their aspirations and ideals! View them even as 'detached fragments of the race,' apart altogether from the influences of Christianity, we must confess that the initial impulse which determined much of their after-movements came from Christian morality. Mill confessed this in part; Miss Martineau never seemed generous enough to recognise it. The character of Jesus Christ exerted no little influence upon Mill; he regarded the Utilitarian theory of morals as in perfect harmony with Christ's teaching, if not its highest expression. We must therefore fall back upon the formative influences at work even in the lives of such 'Rational Sceptics' as these. The very Christianity they reject is at work upon their character and life, and hence *they* are not the outcome of Scepticism alone. Even in them we see traces of the loss sustained through their giving up, or through their not accepting, the faith of the Gospel; how much more, were their views to be generally adopted by the community? Faith in the living God unquestionably gives new

¹ 'Essays,' vol. i.

dignity to human life, and a deeper meaning to all human action. This Mill would admit.¹ If Miss Martineau's theory of life were adopted, we do not see, looking at life from our standpoint, and forgetting for the moment those higher aspects of truth suggested by Mr. Hutton, how there could be any radical distinction between right and wrong, between moral good and moral evil. Atheistic systems must empty all such terms of their true meaning, and, as the result, rob those who accept them of the benefit of all the higher motives to righteousness. A deeper study of Pagan life, its moral barrenness and spiritual death, will be the best antidote to such teachings as those of Miss Martineau. If Mr. Mill, Mr. Atkinson, and Miss Martineau were accepted as the spiritual guides of the age, there would soon be a total eclipse of that Sun that now gives moral light and heat to humanity. Even in the gifted writers whose spiritual history we have been discussing there is proof of partial loss ; and they are exceptional, and must not be taken as fair samples of the effects of their teaching on the multitude. Whatever we may say of such high-caste Brahmins of society, 'Rational Scepticism' would most certainly destroy the spiritual life of the many. Of such a calamity there may be partial, but not universal experience. Religion is too essential to humanity, the heart of man thirsts too deeply for God, for any such catastrophe to overtake mankind ; the unsophisticated human heart will never accept as its guides those who offer a morality in which there is responsibility without true freedom, and a religion, in which there is no God above, and no life beyond the present.

¹ Has admitted, indeed, for he speaks of the strength of the feeling that we are 'co-worker- with God.' But his Theistic faith was hardly strong enough to enable him to feel this to the full extent possible.

CHAPTER V.

SECULARISM.

‘If you would emancipate yourselves from the arbitrary rule and tyranny of man, you must begin by rightly adoring God.’—MAZZINI.

‘I hold you will not compass your poor ends
Of barley-feeding and material ease,
Without a poet’s individualism
To work your universal. It takes a soul
To move a body ; it takes a high-souled man
To move the masses, even to a cleaner sty.’

E. B. BROWNING.

The Secularist ‘is like a chemist who, in a testing analysis, after putting into per-centages all he can measure, if he finds something behind so minute as to refuse any quantitative estimate, calls it by the name of “trace.” ’—

W. E. GLADSTONE.

SECULARISM, says Professor Flint, is the ‘most prevalent form of unbelief among the manual workers of this country ; it is almost confined to them ; and the chief causes of its spread, and of the character which it bears, must be sought for in their history.’ This estimate will not, we presume, be seriously questioned by anyone familiar with the facts of the case. The classes to which he refers are those most largely represented in Secular meetings, for their use Secular works are prepared, and to them chiefly Secular lecturers address their arguments. Nor need we differ from Dr. Flint in the reasons assigned for the growth of this form of unbelief. He traces Secularism to causes connected with our industrial history, and in so doing gives a telling illustration of the universality of moral law ; *unjust social arrangements ever lead to injurious spiritual results.* Professor Cairnes very solemnly warns us against neglecting the

moral lessons taught by 'commercial crises, conflicts of capital and labour, Sheffield outrages, excess of population, pauperism,' and the like. He plainly regards these, even from the point of view of a political economist, as nature's penalties for our neglect of her wise laws.¹ So would Dr. Flint have us to see in the origin and progress of Secularism indications of an unhealthy social state.²

There are other reasons why this should be a more popular form of unbelief than some of the bolder types of Scepticism. Atheism, pure and simple, no doubts exists among this class of the people, finds here and there its friends among all classes, but Atheism demands, on the part of all who accept it, an amount of courage and self-confidence happily not common even in this self-asserting age. Before anyone can boldly affirm there is no God, he must have great faith in himself, and great confidence in the conclusions to which his inquiries have led him ; he must also have but little veneration for the opinion of others, in this case others being the vast majority of the human race.³ In the same way Materialism, as a philosophy of the universe, is confined to, and understood by, the few. It is too abstruse, though apparently so simple, for the majority of people ; moreover, its opposition to the deep-seated, we may almost say instinctive, *belief in design*, is too radical for it ever to find favour with the masses of the people. Learned biologists and philosophers may ridicule Paley's watch-theory, and women like Miss Martineau may sneer at the Christian's belief in a 'man-God ;' for many days to come such beliefs will

¹ See 'Essays on Political Economy,' p. 263.

² See Dr. Flint's work on 'Anti-Theistic Theories.' Lecture on 'Secularism,' with notes.

³ 'There are, I hope, no Atheists among you ; were there any they would deserve pity rather than malediction. The first Atheist was surely one who had concealed some crime from his fellow-men, and who sought by denying God to free himself from the sole witness from Whom concealment was impossible ! Or, perhaps, the first Atheist was a tyrant, who, having destroyed one half of the soul of his brethren by depriving them of liberty, endeavoured to substitute the worship of brute force for faith in duty and eternal right.'—*Mazzini*.

seem more rational to the masses of men than the cold affirmations of the Materialistic creed. Many may often act as if there were no God, may at times appear willing to leave this an open question ; but when called to make their election, it will be a long time before they accept the alternative of either the Atheist or the thoroughgoing Materialist.

Pantheism, again, is too mystical to become the ordinary creed of a Western people. Literary men may hold it, and minds of the poetic order may be fascinated by its unity and simplicity; metaphysicians may speak of the *under-soul* or the *over-soul* of the world ; the men and women who have to toil for their daily bread from early morn till late at night will demand a more substantial kind of spiritual fare. Much the same remark may be made of the 'Religion of Humanity,' as it is called. To worship a 'Grand Being' who, or which, has no existence, save a purely ideal one in the mind of the conscious worshipper, must ever appear absurd to the common people. To regard the love of this or that individual as *selfish and degrading*, to consider it an unworthy feeling either to desire or to expect existence of any kind for the individual, yet to elevate the idea of the whole of humanity past, present, and to come, into a Grand Being to be revered and worshipped, must appear an impossible thing to most of those whose lives are spent battling with very real foes. They will be disposed to say: 'Jesus we know ; *His* Father in heaven we can worship and love ; His idea of life is above us, and may lift us up, if only we could truly reverence it, His heaven were grand enough if only we were worthy of it,—but this worship and this immortality seem to us unworthy and unreal.' They will agree with Professor Huxley in thinking this form of religion 'Catholicism *minus* Christianity ;'¹ it contains all the objectionable features of the one, with none of the redeeming qualities of the other.

There remains, then, for a practical people like ourselves, this religion of Secularism, if we wish to break with the religion of our fathers and do not feel bold enough to accept any of the

¹ See 'Lay Sermons, Addresses and Reviews,' by Professor Huxley, F.R.S.

other forms of Scepticism already mentioned. Indeed, *Secularism* may claim to be a thoroughly *English* form of unbelief; it originated on English soil, and is an apt illustration of that spirit of compromise everywhere characteristic of English institutions,—that which to some may appear their chief glory. It is said, and not in our opinion without reason, that before any opinion, philosophy, or scheme of life commends itself to the English mind, it must partake of this element of compromise. Is some reform advocated in Parliament by a responsible Minister of State? Before it has the remotest chance of being adopted, it must be shown to be a sort of middle position between two opposite extremes; it must contain all that is good in the old policy, and avoid all that appears evil in some more revolutionary proposal. Unless these elements are seen to be in it, *or said to be in it, for seeing is here of less account*, there is no chance of such a reform being allowed to pass into law. To do a thing simply because it is *right*, to grant any demand because it is *just*, to believe any doctrine on the ground that it is *true*, would appear foreign to our modes of thought and habits of life. This spirit of compromise is seen in all our most cherished institutions, and is probably the chief cause of many of our difficulties, on the one hand, and of much of our prosperity on the other.¹ The very Prayer-Book illustrates this spirit; the articles look one way, and the other parts of the Book, some of them very decidedly, the other. Statesmen are accustomed to sneer at what they call mere *logical consistency*, and rejoice that they take more *practical* views of life, as if what is really false in thought could be true and practical in deed or in action!

Secularism is the very child of compromise, and this may have helped to commend it to a people whose genius is so practical. Its basis is professedly neither Theistic nor Atheistic; it professes to give to men all the practical benefits of a religion

¹ Hence the long and costly *agitation* necessary before any reform is made; hence also that political education of the people, and that thorough sifting of the proposed scheme, that contribute so much to the popularity and stability of institutions once adopted.

without putting them to the trouble of deciding whether there be a God or not.¹ Among its adherents are men of all beliefs and no beliefs, and in lectures addressed to secularists appeals are made now to the Theistic and anon to the Atheistic tendencies of mankind.² Is it a bold, even daringly presumptuous, thing for any man to say there is no God? Secularism demands no such affirmation. Is it, on the other hand, a dangerous thing, in these days of light, in these days of scientific progress and precision of thought, to accept a revelation already so much attacked and discredited in high quarters? Secularism enables a man to occupy a standpoint between these two,—to reject the one without affirming the other. In point of fact, as Secularists tell us, one of the advantages of this view of life is that it enables men of all creeds, or of no creed, to unite together in doing what all admit to be necessary and worthy, without asking them to give any deliverance on themes so lofty as God, Freedom, and Immortality. The Secularist does not deny the existence of a God, he does not affirm that there is no life beyond the grave; he simply refuses to deal with such matters as these. As the doctor, when called to the bedside of the sick man, prescribes what he deems best, and gives no opinion on the exciting questions of the hour; as the astronomer teaches all he knows about the stars, say, without offering any opinion as to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch; as the chemist, in making his analysis of some materials submitted to him, gives no deliverance on the probable antiquity of man; so the Secularist confines his attention to this life, and *as a Secularist*, says nothing, believes nothing, affirms nothing, about any other. 'Here we find ourselves possessed of certain powers and possibilities, with certain well defined privileges and responsibilities; let us make the most of these powers, let us discharge

¹ 'The Secularist concerns himself with this world, without denying or discussing any other world, either the origin of this or the existence of that.'—*Holyoake*.

² Mr. Chas. Watts, for example, addresses certain arguments to men in his 'Secularism in its Various Relations,' 'on the supposition that there is a God, and that the human soul is immortal!' p. 54.

these obligations, without speculating about either past or future.' This is, briefly expressed, the position of the Secularist ; it seems a simple position to take up, it appears to avoid the vexed questions of Scepticism, but *practically*, as we must try to show, it is untenable. In order to do his work aright in the present age, man must consider its relation to the ages that are past ; so in order to live as he ought here, man must decide whether there are other worlds, and if so, what his relation is to them. As one has well said, the sailor guides his course over seas that belong to this terrestrial system by observations and measurements of things celestial.¹ The Secularist must not be allowed to ignore questions relating to another life, for these enter most deeply into the meaning of the life that is here and now, and only by thinking aright about that which is above us can we do our duty to that which is beneath and around us. 'If there be a future world, it is our *present* duty to take full account of the fact.'²

In order to prove that the Secularist's position is an untenable one, we do not require to discuss the origin and history of this movement. It will be sufficient to show that whatever is good in Secularism in no real sense belongs to it, and that Christianity supplies, and this, too, under much better conditions, all that in it is worthy of admiration. As a theory of life, as a philosophy of things, or even as a *working-plan*, it breaks down utterly and hopelessly. It is impossible for any serious thinker to ignore all the deeper questions in the manner recommended by the Secularist. The chemist may ignore the philosophy of Kant, and the biologist need not concern himself with questions as to the deluge, but no one, in this country at least, can afford to ignore Christianity ; least of all do we find Secularists adopting such views of life. Men like Mr. Holyoake, Mr. Foote, Mr. Watts, Mr. Bradlaugh, and Dr. Aveling, certainly cannot be said to ignore Christianity ; if *Secularism*, as a theory, refuses to pro-

¹ 'To those who speak to you of heaven and seek to separate it from earth, you will say that heaven and earth are one, even as the *way* and the *goal* are one.'—*Mazzini*.

² Dr. Flint.

nounce upon such questions, Secularists give no uncertain sound. 'The unvarying stability of the laws of nature,' says Mr. Watts, 'on which Secularism is founded, *might* be the result of the immutable decrees of an immutable God, and is, therefore, in itself quite reconcilable with the Theistic hypothesis.' Hence, he concludes that there is *a* Theism and there is *a* Pantheism, not inconsistent with the principles of Secularism as expounded by himself. As to the relation of Secularism to revealed religion, he speaks decidedly: 'No such religion can be compatible with Secularism; in theory Secularism and revealed religion are in direct and fundamental antagonism to each other. . . . This antagonism is such as no sophistry can ever conciliate; as theories of life their war is internecine, and can only end with the destruction of the one or the other or both. . . . Secularism in practice, the Secularist as a man of action, can no more ignore Christianity than a Frenchman could recently ignore the German army of occupation.'¹ 'It is the duty of every Secularist,' says Mr. Bradlaugh, 'to make active war on theological teachings. It is of no use saying, Ignore the Clergy. You cannot talk of ignoring St. Paul's Cathedral—it is too high. You cannot talk of ignoring the Religious Tract Society—it is too wealthy. . . . The upas-tree of religion overspreads the whole earth; it hides with its thick foliage of Churchcraft the rays of truth from humankind, and we must cut at its root and strip away its branches.'² That Mr. Watts and Mr. Bradlaugh are right, must appear evident to anyone who considers seriously the importance of the issues involved in this controversy.

Mr. Watts, an authorised and popular lecturer on Secularism, thus states the theory which he and others propose to give us in place of the Christianity they are so anxious to remove: The 'theory of Secularism is simply that this life and this world in which we live demand and will reward our utmost cultivation; that the instruments of this cultivation are reason and social effort; that the harvest to be reaped from it is happiness general

¹ 'Secularism in its Various Relations.'

² Discussion between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Holyoake, London, 1870.

and universal.' He accepts Mr. Mill's Utilitarianism as the Secular theory of morals, as the standard of happiness, and he regards 'Secularism as the true religion of humanity.' Before the beneficent march of this doctrine he expects the evils that have hitherto afflicted mankind to disappear. All error, ignorance, superstition, and the priestcrafts which live by these, will depart if only the conjuror's wand of Secularism is waved before the eyes of men. Secularism will make men better in life and braver in death; will emancipate their minds from bondage to the unseen and eternal, and enable them to bend the whole energy of their being to the pursuit of what is useful to man. Science will then become man's 'Providence,' and scientifically directed aims his form of prayer. Under these new influences he will become happy and noble and free!

The first thought that arises in the mind is that those who expect such splendid results from the spread of Secularism must be extremely credulous. Secularists talk as if man could be saved from his vices and his sins by the knowledge that they are hurtful to his nature, and inimical to his highest happiness. They forget that men by no means ignorant have before now seen and approved the good, yet ardently followed the evil.

Without dwelling longer on these general considerations, we submit the following brief criticisms on this theory of life:

1. When Secularism is offered as a substitute for Christianity, the assumption is always made that the latter system is opposed to 'science,' to the 'cultivation of this life,' and to 'happiness general and individual.' No assumption could well be more thoroughly groundless. If we were to admit, what Secularist teachers seem to assume, that the one business of the Christian in this world is to get ready for leaving it,—that his attitude towards the knowledge of nature and its laws, of human nature and its conditions, is one of uncompromising hostility,—there might be some pretext for such a plea; we need hardly say that no intelligent believer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ would take up such a position. The Christian, it is true, does not regard this life as *the whole of life*,—does not believe that even this life can be well and truly lived unless its higher and

larger issues are properly understood and constantly realized. This is very different from the caricature of his view presented by Mr. Watts. It is not true that the Christian ignores or thinks lightly of the present life, nor is it true that he thinks simply of how to be ready to leave this world. It is not true that Christianity is opposed to science; on the contrary, wherever men have come under its enlightening influences they have sought the progress of all kinds of knowledge. Even 'Free-thinkers,' as Secularists delight to call themselves, have attributed to Christianity many of the best influences now at work in civilization. Speaking of present conditions of society,—the 'immoderate growth of riches,' the 'decay of morals and religion,' and other evils that threaten to bring about a 'mighty revolution'—Lange, the historian of Materialism, reminds us that 'one of the most important remedies lies beyond doubt in *those very ideas of Christianity whose moral effects are just as often undervalued as they are exaggerated.*' He tells us that the 'morality of the New Testament has exercised a *profound effect upon the peoples of the Christian world,*' and warns us against the assumption that this effect is confined to those who repeat 'the words of its doctrines.' He thinks it probable that most of the 'energetic, even revolutionary, efforts of this century *to transform the forms of society in favour of the down-trodden masses are very intimately connected with the New Testament ideas.*'¹ He traces the connection between efforts of 'poor relief' and Christian principles, between 'Comte's moral principles (lauded often as if they were a new revelation) and those of Christianity'—yea, he affirms that it is 'scarcely doubtful that we may in great part attribute *to the quiet but continual operation of Christian ideas not merely our moral, but even our intellectual progress.*'² Thus, even Sceptics like Lange will join with us in repelling the insinuation that Christianity, as such, is hostile to intellectual, moral, and social progress. We may go much further, and affirm, without fear of contradiction, that no

¹ 'Christianity, by preaching the Gospel to the poor, unhinged the ancient world.'—*Lange*.

² *Lange's 'History of Materialism,'* Trübner and Co.

book has done so much to promote intellectual and moral progress as the Bible,—that book so much ridiculed and so little studied by Secularists.¹ M. de Laveleye, after a survey of various countries, and a full discussion of their social and intellectual condition, declares that it is '*religion, and not race, which is the cause of the extraordinary prosperity of certain nations.*' He shows that 'as soon as the Reformation had in Germany placed the Gospel in the hands of the peasantry, they claimed abolition of serfdom, and the recognition of their ancient rights, in the name of Christian liberty. . . . The Renaissance was a return to antiquity, the Reformation a return to the Gospel. The Gospel, being superior to the tradition of antiquity, was sure to yield better fruits.'² The more the spirit of the Bible becomes the spirit of the people, the less chance for bondage or despotism of any kind, whether of the lusts and passions within, or the priestcraft and kingcrafts without, man. From beginning to end the Bible influence is on the side of science and freedom, and it has helped to make our modern nations what they are. Its teachings about industry and political economy, about the relation between righteousness and national greatness, about the duties of kings and subjects—yea, even its lessons on sanitary matters,³ if carefully studied and honestly carried out, would make the deserts of our modern life blossom as the rose, and turn many a barren wilderness into a fruitful field.

2. The relations of Secularism, as such, to religion are utterly unworkable. As we have already seen, its more energetic advocates are in no sense neutral,—are most decidedly hostile, often bitterly so,—to Christianity. Neutrality in such questions is possible only where there is sublime indifference to all that is deepest and most real in human life. Christianity and Secularism, as Mr. Watts says, must be deadly foes. Secu-

¹ See Lecky's 'History of European Morals.'

² 'Protestantism and Catholicism in their bearing upon the Liberty and Prosperity of Nations,' by E. de Laveleye.

³ So Dr. Playfair remarks. Perhaps this is one reason why the Jews enjoy better health and longer life than the Christians. See Richardson's '*Health and Life.*'

larism professes to confine itself to the cultivation of this life, and it works by means of 'reason and social effort;' but human reason is such that it cannot but deal with questions relating to a future life. It refuses to ignore all that is most vital to itself, and before it can deal aright with the problems of this life, it must determine whether *this life be the whole of life*. Questions about the whence and the whither of man may be termed speculative; in point of fact, they are most intensely practical, and demand the serious attention of every sane mind. We cannot ignore them, they refuse to be ignored, and Reason is able to ignore them only by abnegating its chief functions. If Christianity be false, it must not only be rejected, but rejected with all the energy of man's nature, and by every means within his reach; if Christianity be true, it is such a truth that it must move human life from its centre to its circumference. A theory of life that professes to ignore the whole subject, as being outside man's range, is an impossible, not to say ridiculous, theory. Christianity comes nearer to us than anything else in these islands, and is more vital than any other question. No earnest man, whatever he may choose to call himself, can long ignore a subject so deeply associated with daily life and thought. Mr. Mill pretended to take up a position of philosophical indifference, and to survey the scene with sublime impartiality; Miss Martineau attempted the same feat, but in both cases, as we have seen, the position was found impossible. Both gave utterance to sentiments showing how the *heart had taken sides*, and that there was most pronounced hostility to the more distinctive claims of Christianity. Secularism must face the problem, must also take its side for or against the religion of Jesus: men may passionately hate, or they may intensely love, Christ, no truly earnest, no really honest, mind can ignore Him and His Gospel. Hence, as we might expect, the advocates of Secularism usually attack Christianity, and this often with great bitterness of feeling. 'Secularism,' says Mr. Watts, 'is at war with it, and must be at war with it continually, until its cathedrals, churches, and chapels are ennobled into schools of science, museums of art, and Secular halls!' Such language

shows anything but neutrality, yet, we take leave to say, it is much more natural and straightforward than language which professes to ignore all the deeper problems of the Christian faith.

3. Taken by itself, Secularism is not, and never can become, a sufficient theory of life. Its standard of morals is Utility, and its ideal of happiness therefore open to all the objections that have been urged against this moral theory. Mr. Watts attempts to define true happiness, but he finds it impossible. He speaks of happiness 'worthy of an intelligent and cultivated human being.' Many Christians conform to this description; they are intelligent and cultivated human beings, yet their ideal of happiness he considers unworthy. He distinguishes between the happiness of a 'pig,' and happiness according to the 'true measure of a man,' but then he gives no scientific definition of what is this true measure, and he ridicules what to many must appear one of the very highest ideals. Secularism has no ideal of its own to set before us, and Utilitarianism is capable of different interpretations. According to many, according even to Mill, Utility is the New Testament ideal of happiness. Others, and not without good reason, object to this reading of Christianity.

For ordinary people, however, these disputes have little interest, and they follow them with much impatience. For our present purpose, it is sufficient to present one single contrast between Secularism and the religion of Jesus Christ. Call both ideals happiness if you will,—we have grave objections to this view of the case, and think it may lead to much misunderstanding, but on this we shall not dwell. Who is to decide as to what are the elements constituting happiness? De Quincey gives a picture of the happy man not likely to be universally acceptable; shall we go to Goethe, one of the greatest of Germans, or shall we appeal to Faraday, one of the humblest and most childlike of Englishmen? The greater, or even the greatest, number here may set up ideals that Mr. Watts will reject as unworthy, yet they claim the right to decide by what, to them, is the highest known human law! Christians who accept the Utilitarian theory of morals, admit into the case, and in addition to this view of it, elements borrowed from

Christianity ; the Secularist is bound to reject these as intruders and as foreign to the scheme. Hence the impossibility of secular morality, not to say of religion. Contrast with this the Christian's ideal of life ; it is to be *Christ-like* in character ; and aim. His standard of perfection, of the 'true measure of a man,' is the actual manhood realized in the Prophet of Nazareth. He need not trouble himself with any discussions as to the philosophy of morality, or with the true 'data of Ethics'; in the teachings of Christ and his Apostles he finds all that he needs of authoritative guidance, in the actual character of Jesus, the loftiest type of manhood. This standard is so simple that it is within the reach of the little child, yet the wisest sage can imagine nothing higher. It is capable of being appreciated by all, and it contains within it, when rightly understood, the truest inspiration for men and women struggling after a nobler life. The ideal grows with the growth of our mental and spiritual nature, and the more deeply we surrender ourselves to its influences, the higher the possibilities open to us of moral progress. Is it likely, then, that with this simple yet sublime ideal before them as the highest life possible to man, as the life which to some extent, and to a growing extent, is possible to all men, the Christian will go after the Secularist's ideal, so uncertain, so indefinite, and so changing?

' And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought ;
Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.'¹

4. The theory of Secularism does not harmonize with the facts of human experience. It fails to meet wants that are confessed to be universal, and it supplies man with no *motive-power* sufficient to enable him to do what he knows to be right. This subject must receive fuller treatment further on ; mean-

¹ ' In Memoriam.'

while we must affirm that man is a religious being, and has acknowledged spiritual wants for which Secularism makes absolutely no provision. Secularists have a rough and ready method of dealing with religion which may appear at times very effective, but which breaks down the moment we begin to inquire more deeply into man's nature and history. Whatever may be said about Atheism, about tribes of so-called Atheists, and about the non-universality of worship, modern researches into the history of mankind have made it clear, that just as man everywhere is a social animal, so, when in his *normal* condition, he is a worshipping being. Secularists may attribute all this to priestcrafts with their lying and self-seeking schemes; it is too late in the day to attempt such explanations of worship. When we find in any country persistent agitation about popular rights, when we find schemes even of the most revolutionary character propounded by men apparently sincere, it is not now considered a proof of statesman-like intellect to attribute these to mere agitation or demagogism. The statesman goes deeper down than the mere surface agitation, on which there may be some settling, and seeks to find in the abuses connected with Governments, or in the injustice of existing social arrangements, perhaps in the oppressions and wrong-doings of centuries ago, the real causes of the dissatisfaction. So the unbiased student of human nature, and of human religions, must find beneath all priestcraft, and behind all fears on which priests may thrive, real and permanent spiritual wants and forces in man's nature and life. With these deeper (may we not say deepest of all) wants Secularism cannot deal; man's deepest 'unrest' in all ages has arisen from his spiritual nature and wants. If his 'animal desires were the beginning and end of his nature, there would be in him no element of unrest; or at least, rest and peace, the rest of satisfied desire, the peace of browsing cattle, would be within his reach. But that which makes him a spiritual being makes him also a restless being.' So speaks Dr. Caird,¹ and such words will meet with a ready response from all who know best what man is. We may appeal from Secular

¹ 'Philosophy of Religion.'

lecturers to the men who are really familiar with man's spiritual history, men like Max Müller,¹ Fairbairn, and others, who have deeply studied the religions of the world. Is man not as truly a religious as he is a thinking being? Can any system of religion in which there is no Personal God, Creator, or Father of men, no life beyond the grave, and no Redemption beyond what man can work out for himself, ever satisfy man? But one answer will come to us from the wisest of men. Man has not only everywhere invented weapons offensive and defensive, not only kindled his fires and cooked his food,—he has also built his Temples and offered his homage to the Great Spirit above him. At times, perhaps, his worship has been grotesque enough, at other times sublime and beautiful; but whether grotesquely or sublimely, man has in every age felt, and tried to get satisfaction for, wants which Secularism does not understand. Man's soul thirsts for the 'living God,' and he can never rest satisfied with the mere facts, forces, and laws, of a world from which this God has been banished, or in which His existence and authority are not recognised. A theory of life which ignores the most vital, and most productive, part of man's history, can never satisfy man's nature; even as a working-plan it can only be adopted by those, who are content to leave unsolved the highest problems about duty and destiny with which the mind of man can deal.

Moreover, Secularism contains no lever capable of lifting man up out of his moral degradation. Mr. Watts speaks of man's 'secular degeneration;' truly man needs to be born again, to be lifted up into a life higher and purer than that in which he now lives, but Secularism has no power to effect a change like this. Science,—if by that is meant simply accurate, orderly, knowledge of the world in which we live, and of which we form so important a part,—contains within itself no such

¹ 'Thus, whether we descend to the lowest roots of our own intellectual growth, or ascend to the heights of modern speculation, everywhere we find religion as a power that conquers, and conquers even those who think that they have conquered it.'—'Hibbert Lectures,' p. 5.

power. Mr. Herbert Spencer remarks how 'amazingly little the teachings given to medical students affect their lives, and how even the most experienced medical men have their prudence scarcely at all increased by their information.'¹ Is this not largely true of all mere science? A heathen moralist reminds us that it is not so much knowledge as *power* that is wanting to us.² The most scientific knowledge of the nature and effects of alcohol will not restrain from intemperance. The desire to leave the world wiser and better than we found it, is a noble, and even an ennobling desire, but it has never shown itself capable of regenerating mankind. As Mrs. Browning tells us, it takes a 'soul to move a body,' and even to move the 'masses to a cleaner stye,' it will take a larger soul than Secularism, as such, possesses. Even if the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' be accepted as the moral end in life, we shall still lack the power needed to change man's nature and make him pursue the good. As the author of 'Ecce Homo' reminds us, we 'destroy pleasure by making it our chief object; its essential nature is corrupted when it is made into a business; the highest perfection of it is not among the pains of exertion, the rewards of industry or ingenuity, but a bounty of nature, a *grace of God*. By contrivance and skill only an inferior sort can be attained, to which the keenness, the glee, the very bitter of the sweet, is wanting. What, then, would the poor and simple-minded gain from such a principle? Epicureanism popularized inevitably turns to vice; no skill in the preachers of it will avail for a moment to prevent the obscene transformation. It would probably be safe to go farther, and say that Epicureanism means vice in all cases except where a rare refinement and tenderness of nature creates a natural propensity to virtue so strong as to disarm the most corrupting influence.' These are not the words of a timid Christian, terrified at the thought of Secular morality ever becoming the ideal of the age; they are the words of a thinker who is gravely dis-

¹ See Spencer on the 'Study of Sociology,' *Contemporary Review*, Dec., 1872.

² St. Paul teaches this lesson in Romans vii.

cussing the lack of moral power in this type of morality, and they are worthy of most careful consideration. For Secularism has little beyond the ideal of Epicurus¹ to offer to man! If so, 'Ecce Homo' being witness, it cannot 'regenerate' mankind. If man is what Secularists teach, if he knows nothing about his origin or destiny, if he has no relations to a higher life than he now lives, if he can know nothing more about himself than physical science and Utilitarian philosophy can teach him, if the grave ends all, and if he believes all this about the *unit called man*, why should he spend his life for the good of the *mass called humanity*? The passions and appetites of mankind, at least of the majority, are too strong and too lawless to be either restrained or eradicated by specifics like these. We are far from desiring to charge Secularists with any wish to encourage the passions of mankind, but we must assert that they have no power to tame the unruly members or to change the evil hearts of men.²

Whatever of good there is in secular principles, as we have already said, exists elsewhere, and that in much purer form and free from many dangerous ingredients. Who loves not knowledge? What Christian, who knows anything of Christianity, would wish to hinder the progress, or frustrate the efforts of true science? As a matter of fact, science owes much to the love of knowledge and the desire for truth kindled in man's breast by the spirit of Christianity. As to the relation of religion to the *present life*, no one truly acquainted with the facts can possibly say that it is hostile. The men most deeply penetrated with the spirit of true religion are those who most truly seek to serve the present age. Those who rightly understand the Word of God, know that godliness or piety has the promise of this life as well as that which is to come; and yet they also know that only those who seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, can give to the present its due place

¹ Epicurus need not be taken as teaching mere 'pig'-happiness, but, has been said, this is the natural, not to say necessary, outcome of this view of life.

² 'The history of self-sacrifice during the last 1800 years has been mainly the history of the action of Christianity upon the world.'—*Locky*.

in the affections. Hence the true Christian ideal is as far from ignoring as from idolizing this present life. *It regards life here and there as one life*, and it seeks to regulate aright the part by regulating aright the whole. If there be a future life, man ought to know it, and if such knowledge is possible to him, it must be the most practical of all kinds of science. To pretend to ignore such questions, is really either to blunt all the moral perceptions and harden the heart, or else to play fast and loose with truth. No earnest mind can rest without definite opinions in such matters. If there be a God, let us worship and adore ; if not, let us shake ourselves free from the delusion, and do all we can to deliver others from the superstition.

No ; whatever men accept or whatever they reject, they cannot long rest satisfied with the timid compromises of Secularism ! Hence, as we have seen, the more energetic Secularists are practically, and some of them avowedly, Atheistic in their beliefs. Neutrality in religion, like neutrality in war or politics, yea, far more than in connection with these, is an impossibility to robust and manly natures.

For the masses, as the author of 'Ecce Homo' reminds us, the creed of Secularism means the practice of sensuality. If men believe that they have no 'image of God' in the very make and build of their nature, why should they try to live for the God-like ?¹ Naturally they will say, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' Secularism, as such, will build no hospitals, feed no hungry, rescue no degraded creatures from worse than death. It will believe in the survival of the fittest, indeed ; but its fittest will be the physically strongest, the men and women who have power to rise above the rest and claim for themselves the highest places ; we have but to study more deeply man's nature and history, to read his truest poetry, and to listen to his sweetest music, to be convinced that this theory will give no salvation. As one has well said, man needs not only reconciliation with nature, needs not only science, and art, and poetry, he needs, oh, how much ! a 'God, a Redemption, and a Heaven.'

¹ 'Have for your watchword not the rights of man,
But this more sacred, more invincible,
Duties of man, and law of life in God.'

The Disciples,' Overture.

CHAPTER VI.

MATERIALISM.

‘Life is not a *consequence* of the organization of matter, but the cause.’

LIONEL S. BEALE.

‘I trust I have not wasted breath :
I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries ; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death.’

TENNYSON.

‘Atheism and Materialism are no necessary results of Scientific Method.’—W. STANLEY JEVONS.

AT the close of Lecky’s ‘History of Rationalism in Europe,’ the following observations will be found : ‘It is as an index of the moral condition of the age that the prevalence of either Spiritualism or Materialism is especially important. *At present, the tendency towards the latter is too manifest to escape the notice of any attentive observer.* That great reaction against the Materialism of the last century, which was represented by the ascendancy of German and Scotch philosophies in England, and by the revival of Cartesianism in France, which produced in art a renewed admiration for Gothic architecture ; in literature, the substitution of a school of poetry appealing powerfully to the passions and the imagination, for the frigid intellectualism of Pope or of Voltaire ; and in religion, the deep sense of sin, displayed in different forms by the early Evangelicals and by the early Tractarians, is everywhere disappearing. . . . This is the shadow resting on the otherwise brilliant picture the history of Rationalism presents. . . . When we look back to the cheerful alacrity with which, in some former ages, men sacrificed all

their material and intellectual interests to what they believed to be right, and when we realize the unclouded assurance that was their reward, it is impossible to deny that we have lost something in our progress.' According, then, to Lecky, the current is setting very decidedly and very strongly in the direction of Materialism, and this theory is opposed to all that is most hopeful in the moral and spiritual life of mankind. Under these conditions, the 'progress' of which he speaks may fairly be considered a doubtful benefit.

In the closing part of Lange's 'History of Materialism,' a work much lauded by the leaders of this school in England, we find similar sentiments. Even where, to some extent, Materialism is welcomed and sympathized with, its moral effects are dreaded. Lange, at all events, seems to look for little that is morally good from its supremacy. 'A current of Materialism runs through our modern civilization which carries away with it everyone who has not somewhere found "firmer anchorage." . . . The ideal has no quotations on our exchanges. . . . If it comes to the dissolution of our present civilization, it will hardly be that any existing Church, and still less Materialism, will succeed to the inheritance, but from some unsuspected corner will emerge some utter absurdity, like the Book of Mormon or Spiritualism, with which the justified ideas of the epoch will fuse themselves, to found a new centre of universal thought, to last perhaps for thousands of years.' Such are the bright vaticinations and sober outlook of the heralds of the new age. It can hardly be said that they are more attractive than the 'Millennium' hitherto expected by the friends of the old religion. Lange stipulates for the 'taking over of our best Church hymns into the new worship';¹ society will need all the moral aid it can get from spiritual hymns, if it is to be directed and controlled by the forces inherent in Materialism. As Christlieb has well said, 'In good sooth, the Materialists are the

¹ 'Ueberweg asked me what hymn I would propose to take from the Protestant hymn-book; and in full consciousness of our difference, I answered immediately, "O bleeding Head, so wounded!" Ueberweg turned away, and gave up any hope of agreeing with me as to the religious poetry of the church of the future.'—*Lange*, vol. iii. p. 321.

most dangerous enemies of progress that the world has ever seen.'¹ Whatever we may think of the moral meaning of the fact,—fact it undoubtedly is,—that Materialism is on the increase in this country, and there are many tendencies, as Lecky has pointed out, stimulating and fostering this view of life's meaning. An age of great and rapid material progress, an age when, under various hostile influences, old ideals have lost much of their power, when wealth has increased with amazing rapidity, and when along with it luxury of every kind has been developed, is sure to encourage the spread of Materialism.

We have attempted to show how Secularism has been built as a kind of half-way-house between faith in the unseen and its entire and absolute negation. The Secular-theory has been recommended on this very ground, that it demands no dogmatic deliverance on themes too deep for human reason's short-sounding-line. 'Let us,' say its teachers, 'unite in doing the best we can for ourselves and for our fellows in this world, leaving to more speculative people questions about a future state and the existence of a Supreme Mind.' The bolder and more earnest men among Secularists find such a position intellectually intolerable. The human mind is so constituted that it must speculate and interrogate, and see if there be any possibility of knowledge in such regions. Hence, as a matter of fact, Secular-advocates preach Materialism as their philosophy of life, and they erect on this intellectual basis their theory of Secularism.

So the Atheist is, of necessity, a Materialist; if he affirms that there is no God, or if he denies the possibility of any knowledge, and says that the human mind is incapable of giving any deliverance, he must still have some theory of life's meaning. He therefore falls back upon this one, and declares that it is the creed of science. Ultimately, too, the 'Religion of Humanity,' with which Secularism is so closely allied, is Materialistic, however contradictory this may appear. At all events, the Positivist fairly eliminates the spiritual from his world, and leaves us nothing but what may be termed Materialism. His God is only an abstract idea, and his worship a worship of

¹ 'Modern Doubt and Christian Belief,' p. 159.

self under another form. At bottom, he must lean towards the explanation of things offered in the name of science, by the Materialist.

Wherever we turn, to whichever brilliant preacher we listen, the thing taught seems ultimately the same ; disguise it how we may, the world in which many of the foremost thinkers would have us live, move, and have our being, is the narrow and dreary world of Materialism.

A thorough discussion of this theory in all its bearings is neither possible nor desirable here. It may be possible to indicate some of the more popular aspects of the Materialistic conception of the world, as these are at work in the thought of our time.

As presented by its popular advocates, Materialism claims to be a truly scientific interpretation of man's nature, and of the world in which he lives. It would explain, so far as explanation is possible, man's origin and history, without assuming the existences of any powers, forces, or beings, other than those called 'material.' Matter and force, perhaps we ought to say energy, are the only things known to man, and by the action and inter-action of these, all that we see and feel, all that we are and shall be, must be determined. Darwin's theory as to man's origin and history this school accepts, not as an hypothesis, but as a *fact of science*. Man differs, it is true, from the lower animals, but simply in the greater complexity of his material organization ; hence he can think and reason better, can love and hate, and fear and hope, more than they can. As to the existence in man of any soul, or spirit, or higher nature, distinguishing him from the brute, this is a mere delusion of the imagination. There is no such *entity*. When man dies, when the breath leaves his body, there is an end of him ; he mixes with the clods of the valley, his physical being is transformed into other forms ; and as for his *mind*, this was simply a function of the brain, and when the one ceased to act, the other ceased to be. All that lives after him is his influence in the world ; the only immortality he may expect is this continued life in the thoughts, feelings, and life of others. All the, so-

called, spiritual facts in connection with man's nature and life are acknowledged,¹ but they receive a kind of physical explanation. They are simply the products of organization: as one says, 'Instinct, passion, thought, are effects of organized substances; mind is the product of brain; it is the manifestation or expression of the brain in action.'² Hence they consistently teach that death ends all.

If we appeal to the existence of what is called 'design in nature,' the Materialists will not listen to us. Design is simply a 'property of organic matter';³ the moral and spiritual in man are the phenomena connected with higher forms of brain organization; what man calls his 'freedom' is a mere illusion of the understanding. All is determined *for*, not *by*, man; he is physically, intellectually, and spiritually, the outcome of his organization.

In order fully to discuss a theory like this, we should have to insist on a more careful definition of terms and use of words. Even great masters of knowledge seem to us to use language chiefly to hide the want of clear ideas.⁴ But for our purpose it will not be necessary to go so thoroughly into this matter. While brilliant professors are discussing with each other the meaning of the obscure facts with which they are dealing, and while great thinkers are seeking to get at the real nature and conditions of all human knowledge, a much humbler work may be possible to us. We may be permitted to offer, to those who are fascinated by the apparent *simplicity* of this philosophy of life, a few considerations worthy of their acceptance.

1. It is not a fact, as is often alleged in popular debate, that *science has established Materialism as the only correct interpretation of the facts of life and thought*. Popular lecturers of the Materialistic school make it appear that just as the new astronomy has displaced the older view, just as the undulatory

¹ Perhaps this may be considered too strong! Some would deny the more essential facts, calling them simple *fancies*.

² Mr. Atkinson. See Professor Blackie's 'Atheism.'

³ Maudsley. See his 'Physiology of Mind,' etc.

⁴ This remark applies to many of Dr. Maudsley's definitions, in terms of matter, of operations that are mental.

while we must affirm that man is a religious being, and has acknowledged spiritual wants for which Secularism makes absolutely no provision. Secularists have a rough and ready method of dealing with religion which may appear at times very effective, but which breaks down the moment we begin to inquire more deeply into man's nature and history. Whatever may be said about Atheism, about tribes of so-called Atheists, and about the non-universality of worship, modern researches into the history of mankind have made it clear, that just as man everywhere is a social animal, so, when in his *normal* condition, he is a worshipping being. Secularists may attribute all this to priestcrafts with their lying and self-seeking schemes; it is too late in the day to attempt such explanations of worship. When we find in any country persistent agitation about popular rights, when we find schemes even of the most revolutionary character propounded by men apparently sincere, it is not now considered a proof of statesman-like intellect to attribute these to mere agitation or demagogism. The statesman goes deeper down than the mere surface agitation, on which there may be some settling, and seeks to find in the abuses connected with Governments, or in the injustice of existing social arrangements, perhaps in the oppressions and wrong-doings of centuries ago, the real causes of the dissatisfaction. So the unbiased student of human nature, and of human religions, must find beneath all priestcraft, and behind all fears on which priests may thrive, real and permanent spiritual wants and forces in man's nature and life. With these deeper (may we not say deepest of all) wants Secularism cannot deal; man's deepest 'unrest' in all ages has arisen from his spiritual nature and wants. If his 'animal desires were the beginning and end of his nature, there would be in him no element of unrest; or at least, rest and peace, the rest of satisfied desire, the peace of browsing cattle, would be within his reach. But that which makes him a spiritual being makes him also a restless being.' So speaks Dr. Caird,¹ and such words will meet with a ready response from all who know best what man is. We may appeal from Secular

¹ 'Philosophy of Religion.'

lecturers to the men who are really familiar with man's spiritual history, men like Max Müller,¹ Fairbairn, and others, who have deeply studied the religions of the world. Is man not as truly a religious as he is a thinking being? Can any system of religion in which there is no Personal God, Creator, or Father of men, no life beyond the grave, and no Redemption beyond what man can work out for himself, ever satisfy man? But one answer will come to us from the wisest of men. Man has not only everywhere invented weapons offensive and defensive, not only kindled his fires and cooked his food,—he has also built his Temples and offered his homage to the Great Spirit above him. At times, perhaps, his worship has been grotesque enough, at other times sublime and beautiful; but whether grotesquely or sublimely, man has in every age felt, and tried to get satisfaction for, wants which Secularism does not understand. Man's soul thirsts for the 'living God,' and he can never rest satisfied with the mere facts, forces, and laws, of a world from which this God has been banished, or in which His existence and authority are not recognised. A theory of life which ignores the most vital, and most productive, part of man's history, can never satisfy man's nature; even as a working-plan it can only be adopted by those, who are content to leave unsolved the highest problems about duty and destiny with which the mind of man can deal.

Moreover, Secularism contains no lever capable of lifting man up out of his moral degradation. Mr. Watts speaks of man's 'secular degeneration;' truly man needs to be born again, to be lifted up into a life higher and purer than that in which he now lives, but Secularism has no power to effect a change like this. Science,—if by that is meant simply accurate, orderly, knowledge of the world in which we live, and of which we form so important a part,—contains within itself no such

¹ 'Thus, whether we descend to the lowest roots of our own intellectual growth, or ascend to the heights of modern speculation, everywhere we find *religion as a power that conquers, and conquers even those who think that they have conquered it.*'—'Hibbert Lectures,' p. 5.

theory of light has taken the place of the emanation one, so Materialism is the sober, scientific, reading of the facts, and has the same claim to be received as the other views above mentioned. This is as far as possible from being the truth, as we shall easily demonstrate. It is admitted, by all who know anything of the subject, that the brain has much to do with thought and with thinking; that there are physical concomitants, so to speak, in connection with every operation called mental; that injuries done to the brain may do much to affect the thinking power of man; and that brain diseases may derange his whole mental and moral life. It is not admitted, and Science does not authoritatively teach, that mind is the *product of brain or of organization*, no matter how complex; or that what we know of the brain and nervous system enables us to account for all the phenomena called mental. Of course, if, at the bidding of Professor Tyndall, we change our definitions of matter, we may see in it anything we please—not only the ‘promise and potency,’ but the *actuality* of all life. Does Materialism gain anything by such changes? We know most of the properties or attributes of matter; we know many of the properties of what we call mind; no knowledge yet possessed by man can enable us to combine in one substance these different properties and attributes. The material and immaterial have always been, and must always be, distinguished by man; nor is there any manner of use in saying that they are a twofold or two-faced unity.¹

Dr. Maudsley and others of the same school are often quoted in support of the Materialistic view of life. Maudsley rejects the name for himself, although he appears pretty much to affirm the theory in his writings. So far as we can see, Maudsley has no light to give us on this dark problem. He may, and does at times, define mind, in terms of matter, as the ‘sum total of *those functions of the brain* which we know as thought, feeling,

¹ As Professor Tyndall himself says, ‘It is no explanation to say that the objective and subjective effects are two sides of one and the same phenomenon. Why should the phenomenon have two sides? This is the very core of the difficulty.’

and will.'¹ By such definitions he brings his friends no nearer their goal. The older thinkers tell us that mind has certain properties, that matter has certain qualities, and that in human life they find these two manifested together. They warn us against saying that the *one is a function of the other*, and they point out that such a conclusion goes beyond the bounds of sober knowledge. At bottom, Maudsley and his school, even after they have changed the definition of matter, come to the same conclusion. 'We know not,' says Maudsley, 'and perhaps never shall know, what mind is.' Professors Huxley and Tyndall tell us that they 'never hope to know anything of the steps by which the passage from the molecular movement to states of consciousness is effected.' If, then, they know so little, why do they speak as if they knew everything? Why do their admirers in the Materialistic camp speak as if they had demonstrated thought to be one of the functions of the brain?

Others, bolder than these, tell us how they get from matter to consciousness, but not *vice versâ*. They point to the insensible gradations by which great organic changes have been brought about. 'Look,' they would say, 'at some of the lowest forms of life, at a lump of organized matter with powers of locomotion! Think by what slow steps we must ascend from this to the brain of Newton! So must we pass by slow stages and insensible gradations from a sort of *sub-consciousness* to the higher and highest forms of mental activity!'

But not even the genius of the late Professor Clifford can commend this theory to the judgment of unbiased minds. Unless we are prepared to regard the *extended and non-extended as identical*, unless we accept *something and nothing* as being the same, unless we are willing to accept words, learned, technical, and cunningly contrived, in place of clear ideas, we shall never accept such a Materialism as this! Dr. Beale, an expert in such studies, and familiar with such regions of life, assures us that there is, as seen under the microscope, much more *even in material organization* than can be accounted for by matter and its known laws. 'No physical explanation will enable us

¹ 'Physiology of Mind.'

to account for the phenomena of growth, nutrition, multiplication, formation, conversion, or other vital phenomena. There is not *a shadow of fact to justify the dogma that mind is a form of force*. A theory of vitality (non-material, psychical) will alone enable us to account for the facts demonstrated in connection with the life of all living things. Although an immaterial agency cannot be demonstrated to the senses, the evidences of the working of such a power are so distinct and clear to the reason that the mind which remains unfettered by the trammels of dogmatic physics, and is free to exercise judgment, will not deny its existence. . . . After having studied the phenomena of living matter for a length of time, and with all the advantages I could obtain, the conviction has been forced on my mind that vital phenomena must be referred to an agency distinct from the physical forces of nature. . . . Life is not a consequence of the organization of matter, but the cause. . . . The recent attempts to interpret vital phenomena by physics are terribly retrograde. Such an interpretation cannot be accepted unless well-established truths which cannot be overthrown are purposely ignored, and old ideas, long since proved to be false, are received as true.¹ Such expressions of opinion from one eminent in scientific research are entitled to our respect. Dr. Beale's attempted explanation may as little satisfy the mind as others that have been offered by great thinkers. We may gain nothing by assuming the existence and operation of a 'vital force;' we may even, as Dr. Smyth suggests, 'transcend the limits of positive science'² by such attempts. We are entitled to say that the Materialistic doctrine, that mind is a function of brain, is a mere figment of the imagination, and in no sense the outcome of scientific knowledge. As to the proposed extensions of the meaning of the term matter, we may reply with Professor Blackie, 'Why this juggle? Far more reasonable were it to deny the existence of matter altogether, than to attribute to it qualities plainly inconsistent with its fundamental conceptions.'³

¹ From 'Life Theories and Religious Thought,' by Lionel S. Beale, M.B., F.R.S. See also Cook's 'Monday Lectures' on this subject.

² 'Old Faiths in New Light.'

³ 'Atheism.'

2. *The Materialistic hypothesis fails to account for some of the most important phenomena connected with man's experience.* According to Professor Beale, Materialism does not account for the very changes taking place in the material organism itself ; how much less the phenomena of man's intellectual, moral, and spiritual life ! Nothing is easier than to give *physiological* definitions of mind and mental processes ; such definitions are words only, and they suggest no rational and consistent thoughts. Maudsley bids us adopt, at least as a theory, the notion that 'all the operations which are considered mental, and to belong to psychology, may be performed as pure functions of the nervous system ;' such a theory must break down the moment we seriously apply it to the facts to be explained. The chief value of any hypothesis is the ease and completeness with which it enables us to explain particular phenomena. His theory ignores the mental altogether, save in words ; it begs the whole question, and assumes that mind is matter and nothing else. When we are told that design is a property of organic matter, that consciousness is a mere incident, not the very essence of mental function ; when attention, reflection, ideas, emotions, volitions, and other manifestations of mind, are said to be due to the action, reaction, and inter-action of molecules, the mysterious changes constantly taking place in mind and brain, we are fully justified in saying that such explanations are mere verbiage and nothing more ; *they begin by ignoring the real phenomena to be accounted for.* That brain and nervous system are essential to thought and feeling, *under present conditions*, we all admit ; that every mental act is accompanied by certain changes of the nervous system we may also concede ; that under present conditions it may be essential to have a physiology or pathology of mind we also grant ;—this is very different from saying that mind is a function of matter, and that thought, feeling, and volition, the phenomena of mind, are fully accounted for by such changes. The chemistry of thought is still as obscure as ever from a physical point of view, and the processes called mental have no real place in the map of the materialist.

Professor Calderwood has recently given us an estimate of the scientific value of these physiological researches into the structure of brain and nervous system, in relation to the mental and moral life of man.¹ He deals with all the known facts, and tries to show their bearing on man's complex life. His conclusion is that there is no scientific warrant for saying that mental 'phenomena are the product of brain activity.' Anatomy and physiology have done much for man's physical well-being, and for his mental life as conditioned by the physical, but these sciences 'afford no explanation of our most ordinary intellectual exercises.' 'It is beyond dispute,' says Dr. Calderwood, 'that the action and reaction of the nerve-tissue mainly concerned with the primary demands of sensation and motion, can afford no explanation of the speculative thought which occupies such a conspicuous place in literature.' Dealing with difficult aspects of intellectual activity, such as the interpretation of sense-impressions, the government of present life under a rational law, and, highest of all, that range of mental activity where thought seeks to explain and to interpret the universe as a whole, he remarks: 'This vast range of intellectual activity must either be brought within the compass of the recognised functions of brain, or it must be acknowledged as beyond dispute that there belongs to man a nature of higher and nobler type which we designate Mind. The most advanced results of physiological science afford us no philosophy of these facts; whereas the results of psychological inquiry imply the possession of a nature higher than the physical. I do not press the question as to the nature of mind beyond ascertaining its functions. That nature is clearly enough indicated *when its functions are shown to be essentially different from those of brain, and altogether higher in kind.* Mind cannot be explained under the conditions applicable to matter. The immateriality of the rational nature is clearly implied in the forms of activity which are peculiar to it.' This is, we venture to say, the sober conclusion of science, if by science we mean *accurate knowledge.*

¹ See his work on the 'Relations of Mind and Brain,' where the latest researches of Ferrier and others are carefully and most candidly discussed.

Maudsley and his school protest against Materialism, denying stoutly that they are Materialists. We need not quarrel about words and names ; if their conclusions have any meaning at all, if they are not mere words, they are Materialistic. Perhaps the best way to deal with such hypotheses is to consider them meaningless. Mind, at all events, refuses to be interpreted by the forms, forces, and laws that belong to the physical realm. The manifestations in the unit man called mental refuse to fit into the moulds prepared by eminent physicists ; much more is this true of the manifestations of mind in the race. The intellectual creations of humanity, the 'thoughts that breathe and the words that burn,' are not to be explained by molecular forces and their known or knowable laws. 'Physical influences may explain differences in the psychical creations of different peoples and times, but cannot explain the creations themselves ; may determine their form, but cannot furnish their matter. Here nature may be a necessary occasion, but mind is an essential cause—the occasion can never be the cause. Mind, not nature, must explain the purpose and progress of humanity.'¹

When we pass from man's purely intellectual activities to those called moral and spiritual, we see still more, if possible, the impotency of the Materialistic theory. If the brain and nervous system, however closely examined, fail to give any complete or rational account of man's self-conscious life, how can we expect, by their aid alone, to understand and interpret man's moral nature? The great German thinker whose thoughts have changed the whole intellectual life of Europe, tells us how his mind was ever filled with wonder as he thought of the starry heaven over-head and the moral law within. To the Materialist, the moral law can have no objective existence. He is able to attribute to it no sacredness and no supreme authority over life. To him the words of the great master, already referred to, must appear either fanatical or meaningless. 'Duty ! thou great, thou exalted name ! Wondrous thought, that workest neither by fond insinuation, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law to the soul, and so extort-

¹ Dr. Fairbairn's 'Studies,' etc.

ing for thyself *always reverence, if not always obedience*,—before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel. Whence thy original? and where find we the root of thy august descent, thus loftily disclaiming all kindred with appetite and want? to be in like manner descended from which root, is the unchanging condition of that worth which mankind can alone impart to themselves.¹

In his essay on 'Conscience and Organization,' Dr. Maudsley gives us a very different, and, to say the least, not so exalted an explanation of the origin of man's moral nature. 'If man,' says he, 'were deprived of the instinct of propagation, and of all that mentally springs from it, most of the poetry, and perhaps *all the moral feeling*, would be cut out of life!'² It is a solemn truth that the age of puberty is one peculiarly trying to the moral life of man; it is also true that the imperious demands of appetite have done much to shake man's moral stability. But when, with all gravity, a would-be philosopher bids us find the 'root of the moral sense in the instinct of propagation;' when he reminds us that this form of self-indulgence, though apparently one of the 'most selfish, is really highly altruistic,' we begin to see that the 'blind lead the blind' when physiologists appear as teachers of morals. Instead of Kant's view, that in the presence of duty appetite is dumb, we are reminded that only when appetite asserts its sway does moral life become possible to man! This theory of morals is certainly in some respects consistent with itself. Darwin proposes to find in the lower animals the rudiments of the moral sense, but the candid naturalist confesses that all the elements now entering into our moral life could not have originally come from this source. Maudsley, more consistent, seeks the explanation of what is highest in humanity *in a function common to man and brute!* May we not rightly say that Materialism fails to account for the facts of man's experience? A truer science can only expect to find what is common to man and animal, not what is peculiar to one of them, in this region of our nature. The

¹ Kant's 'Metaphysic of Ethics,' Calderwood's edition.

² See 'Body and Mind,' by Dr. Maudsley.

moral life of man must be held to be that which differentiates him from the lower animals. There is an animal nature in man, unquestionably, and it must influence his whole moral life. The 'sensual part of our nature,' says Lecky, 'is always the lower part ;' but the higher part of man's complex being cannot be scientifically explained by the lower. The two may indeed be related, but if elements foreign to the one enter into, yea, form the very essence of, the other, then we must not ask the lower to account for the higher. This were a development theory indeed ! Without dwelling at any greater length on this particular subject, we may fairly assert that Maudsley and his school cannot on Materialistic principles account for moral life. They may sneer at 'freedom of the will' as an 'effete superstition, the offshoot of ignorance, mischievously drawing men's minds away from the beneficial recognition of the universal reign of law, and of the solemn responsibilities under the stern necessities of universal causation,' but their very sneers reveal the poverty of their scientific resources in this region. How, may we not ask, can there be responsibility if there is no freedom ? Man is certainly conscious of responsibility ; this is one of the most universal, as well as simple, facts of his experience ; but, if reason be entitled to give any testimony at all, it will assert that responsibility has no meaning to a being who is not free ! Responsible *to whom and for what*, we ask ? If our thoughts, feelings, and volitions, our beliefs and acts, whether moral or *un-moral*, are under the control of a stern necessity, and if that necessity is universal, that control binding on all,—if freedom of will, or, to put it better, rational freedom of action, be an 'effete superstition,'—whence this idea of responsibility, whether solemn or otherwise ? To affirm responsibility in a world such as is pictured for us in the philosophy of Maudsley must appear irrational. If we make the whole of man's moral life so many links in the chain of universal causation, if we deny to the will of man any real control over action, if we affirm necessity, stern and universal, we leave no room for any sense of duty, or any feeling of guilt.¹ As Fairbairn remarks : 'If man be the mere

¹ Moleschott says : 'Sin lies in the unnatural and not in the will to do evil. Speech and style, good and bad actions, courage, half-heartedness,

product of mechanical and necessary forces, they must rule him ; but where they rule there may be a breakdown, but can be no evil, an effective or resultful motion, but can be no good.

. . . Does the will count for anything in the sphere of action ? If man is to any extent or in any real sense free, he cannot be the mere product of molecular action ; if he is the pure creature of primordial molecules, his actions must be as much necessitated as the movements of the planets or the ebb and flow of the tides.¹

All such hypotheses break down the instant they are applied to the facts of man's mental and moral life. How on such principles are we to account for the testimony of man's consciousness, and for the simplest phenomena of the moral life ? What are we to make of man's sense of sin, his consciousness of guilt and unworthiness, sometimes so acute and so keenly felt ? What do we say about his praise or his blame on such a theory of life ? In short, such a view will not work ; there is no power in it to enable a man to get through the mental life of a single hour without being involved in intellectual confusion and absurdity.

Here we may fairly appeal from 'Philip drunk to Philip sober,' to show that the theory breaks down under the strain of real experience. When Dr. Maudsley discusses volition, and when especially he attempts to determine the amount and character of human 'responsibility,' he talks like men who believe in freedom of choice. He speaks of a 'person of extraordinary genius' making 'circumstances conform' to his will. Does he not see that on his theory *one such exceptional case would amount to a miracle ?* Universal causation can make no exceptions in favour of men, whether ordinary or extraordinary. If genius is to be explained on scientific principles, we must leave room for it in the common life of man. On Materialist-principles, on the theory that freedom of will is an 'effete superstition,' what are

and treachery are all natural phenomena ; and all of them stand in a direct relation to indispensable causes as their natural consequences, just as much as the revolutions of the globe.' Even more outspoken denials of moral distinctions may easily be found. See Christlieb's 'Modern Doubt,' pp. 157-8.

¹ Fairbairn's 'Studies in Philosophy.'

we to make of the following? 'A great purpose earnestly pursued through life, a purpose to the achievement of which the energies of the individual have been definitely bent, and which has, therefore, involved much renunciation and discipline of self, has perhaps been a saving labour to the one (man), while the absence of such a life-aim, whether great in itself, or great to the individual in the self-discipline which its pursuit entailed, may have left the other without a sufficiently powerful motive to self-government, and so have opened the door to the perturbed streams of thought and feeling which make for madness.'¹ All this seems to us both sound philosophy and excellent suggestion, but how can its relevancy be shown on Maudsley's principles? Given only a great purpose formed and earnestly pursued through life, the whole energies of man's being bent to the accomplishment of this aim; given the power to form such a purpose, to govern self in its interests, and under the constraint of its high motive power; given the power to resist or to overcome taints and tendencies within and obstacles without; given, we say, all this, and what is wanting to moral freedom? *A being who can do all this has within the limits of a world like ours the only kind of freedom for which wise men have ever contended, the capacity of rational self-government under moral law.* Just as no one can either regulate his own life, or guide the action of others, without assuming and acting on principles that are non-Materialistic, so no one can give any rational explanation of the commonest experiences of man's moral life without affirming the existence and practical reality of freedom. On these, as well as other grounds, we are warranted in saying that, on the one hand, science cannot be said to have established the claims of this theory, and on the other, its teachings about nature and man do not give any reasonable philosophy of facts acknowledged by all parties.²

¹ Maudsley's 'Pathology of Mind,' p. 104. See also his 'Responsibility in Mental Diseases,' p. 269.

² Christlieb shows how Materialism may teach a needed lesson to 'one-sided Idealists,' who overlook their 'dependence on material influences. See 'Modern Doubt,' p. 169.

We might justly have taken up positions much more decidedly antagonistic to this view of life ; to say that it gives no explanation of the facts is certainly to put the case in its mildest form. We complained that Secularism ignored important facts in connection with man's moral experience altogether ; Materialism takes up a much bolder attitude, inasmuch as it professes to give a complete solution of the problem that Secularism refuses to touch. The Materialist does not say, ' Ignore these deep questions ; ' he declares that he has satisfactorily accounted for all the phenomena, has reduced the many to that unity after which mind ever strives ; and yet the more we study his ' unity,' the more we shall be persuaded that it is either purely *verbal*, or that it is not *Materialistic*. He first empties the old terms of all their true and real meaning, and then declares that he has explained them to us. Before we refer all that we see and feel and know to the action and interaction of the Materialist's forces, we have first to change our ideas about the contents and character of these forces at work. As Caird reminds us, this is rather to ' spiritualize matter than materialize mind ' ;¹ and this is the direction in which the current of Materialistic and semi-Materialistic thought is now flowing. But as Martineau well says : ' When he (the Materialist) asks for *no more than matter* for his purpose, he must surely be understood to require nothing but the *essentials of matter*, the characters which enter into its definition ; and to pledge himself to deduce out of these all the accessory characters which appear here and not there, and which discriminate the several provinces of nature.'² Such a demand never satisfies this school ; they deal with matter and energy much as the conjuror deals with his instruments, they put into them, and bring out of them, what pleases them for the moment. Even then, from the standpoint of accurate thinking, Materialism must ever be considered a failure ; its theory of life is neither consistent nor sufficient. And some of the ablest thinkers of our time,—men like the lamented Mr.

¹ Caird's ' Philosophy of Religion.'

² ' Modern Materialism,' *Contemporary Review* for February and March, 1876.

Green and others,—are making this plain enough. It has been the fashion of late to ridicule metaphysics, and to extol what is called Positive thought; men are beginning to see that they must think and philosophize. 'In spite of the cheap wit expended in derision of metaphysics, and the brave preference avowed for *terra firma*, you can escape them only by knowing where you are. In their embrace you live and move and have your being; and however fast your foot may cling to the earth, none the less do you swim with it through the infinite space which, even in its emptiness, is yet the condition of all solidity.'¹ It is becoming every day clearer that the apostles of science, who have done so much to extol Materialism and to depreciate metaphysics in more recent years, have been themselves philosophizing all the time. Their pretended science has been bad metaphysics, and their Positive methods only a new form of dogmatism. And now we have men like Green, and a host of others, going back to the beginning, and seeking to lay once more on a spiritual basis, which is the only rational one, the foundations of human knowledge.

In the Materialist's hands moral and spiritual terms and ideas are simply transfigured. He cannot be said to explain them, nor does he give any rational account of what is behind them. If the simplest experiences of man's moral life, the feeling of unworthiness, the consciousness of guilt, the sense of sin, are left unexplained, what can he make of man's higher spiritual emotions and experiences? They are to him either the outcome of fanaticism or folly,—pictures flung upon the screen of life by a fancy that is disordered, not faint traces of that image of God in which he was created. Moreover, as we shall have occasion afterwards to show, the Materialistic hypothesis gives no explanation of the actual historical facts of life in connection with Religion. It cannot any longer be allowed to evolve out of the belief of ghosts, out of the phenomena of sleep and dreaming, the grandest Religions of the world; the testimony of history, not to speak of the testimony of consciousness, is decisive here. Nor can the Materialist account for the origin, progress, and

¹ Martineau.

power of Christianity ; what can he make of the appearance of Jesus Christ and His influence over the noblest and best of men? What can he make of His power to save, to regenerate the vilest, and to transform them into the purest and humblest of men and women? The 'life and immortality' brought to the world by Jesus Christ have to be accounted for ; not only the belief in immortality, but the power, the dynamic energy, of immortality itself. Speaking of Religion, Dr. Martineau says, 'if its power is noble, its essence is true.' On the theory of the Materialist, the essence of the noblest power on earth must be *unreal* ; not only is all the childlike faith of the wisest and best of men discredited by this view of things, *but the faith of Jesus Christ* is also seen to be but the baseless fabric of a vision. Truly the Materialist is a destroyer of the peace, and a frustrator of the highest purposes of man. No wonder, in view of the moral effects of his work upon man and upon life, that men like Lecky and Lange should anticipate his supremacy with something akin to dread ; no wonder that in the 'Church of the future,' a Church without any fixed beliefs in a God above or a spiritual life within man—Lange should desire Christian hymns, and the spiritual influence of the ideal of the Church of the past. The world has seen many sad sights, and heard many discordant sounds, but the saddest sight of all would be the elevation of Materialism into the position still held by Christianity. For our part, we fear no such catastrophe ; so long as man is what he is, so long as life is what it ever has been, so long will man refuse to be satisfied with a theory which not only empties heaven of its meaning, but takes from earth itself all that has made it dear to man. Fairbairn reminds us, and in these days of doubt and fear this is needful, that 'Christianity does not depend for either its existence or its authority on Theories of Infallibility or Inspiration. God reveals himself in humanity, and His voice can cease to speak only when his organ ceases to be.'¹ So the most convincing proof that Materialism is not *the* Philosophy of the universe, man carries within his own breast. Even if he were to forget to listen to that voice within, the echo of the

¹ 'Studies in the Philosophy of Religion,' etc., p. 351.

Supreme mind without him, still Materialism must fail, for man lives, moves, and has his being, in a life other and higher than his own. The most Atheistic of Materialists believe in the 'Survival of the Fittest,' in the manifestations everywhere of orderly life ; thus both Theist and Atheist, both Spiritualist and Materialist, confess the facts. In this *order* man lives, and as he knows it, he may trust and not be afraid. Why do the 'fittest' survive? Why does this power, ever in the long run, make for Righteousness? Because behind the order there is an *Orderer*, and because all these, and myriad other illustrations, are the proofs to man's spirit of the existence and working of the Father of Spirits. Men ask us for proofs of the existence of Power, of a Supreme Mind: given only the open eye, the hearing ear, and the trustful heart, and these are everywhere visible in this very order which all confess. In this living, working order, in the existence, power, and purpose of which it is the outward expression, we have the best guarantees against the triumph of Materialism.

CHAPTER VII.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

'The abnegation of reason is not the evidence of faith, but the confession of despair ; reason and reverence are natural allies, though untoward circumstances may sometimes interpose and divorce them.'—BISHOP LIGHTFOOT.

'Thought, without reverence, is barren, perhaps poisonous.'—CARLYLE.

'Clear the mind of God, and truth is reduced almost to mere knowledge, —true "information."'—R. H. HUTTON.

'Before a vigorous logical scrutiny, the reign of law will prove to be an unverified hypothesis, the uniformity of Nature an ambiguous expression, the certainty of our scientific inferences to a great extent a delusion.'—W. STANLEY JEVONS.

Is there any real conflict between religion and science? In other words,—are the facts on which, ultimately, religion must rest, at all affected by the genuine discoveries and authoritative teachings of science? These questions we shall discuss only in the most general way, reserving for other chapters the consideration in greater detail of alleged oppositions between the teachings of science and the truths of Divine Revelation.

At the very threshold of this discussion we meet with conflicting opinions and estimates. According to some authorities, there is not only opposition, but absolute and hopeless antagonism between the beliefs of religious men and the fixed beliefs of men of science. They would have us believe, that from the first dawn of scientific inquiry to its most recent triumphs, the opposition of religion has been constant and uniform, and that the clearer light and fuller knowledge of our age only helps us to see the impossibility of any real friendship between the two opposing movements. According to others there is no real conflict ; the combatants are only looking at different sides of the shield, as of yore. With the

proverbial eagerness and one-sidedness of Controversialists, they have refused to allow due weight to each other's arguments; from this point of view the conflict appears simply a verbal one, and where there has been real antagonism, or open and avowed contradiction, these have arisen chiefly from the ignorance of both parties.

Others, again, admit the reality and the danger of the conflict, but they think they are able to reconcile the opposing claims. One of the philosophers of our age, according to many its chief light, has proposed a scheme of reconciliation with the view of forever ending this unholy war. Unfortunately, this reconciliation demands from religion the surrender of all for which it has ever contended. Were religious men to accept Mr. Spencer's view, they would be much in the position of a general who had given up the citadel to the enemy, but who had graciously been permitted to occupy a few outposts, on condition that he give these up one by one as they are demanded! Such a scheme of reconciliation obviously must be rejected by all who believe in the reality and the necessity of religion.

That there is, at all events, the appearance of conflict at present between science and religion, no one can well deny; there may not be absolute contradiction, there may not be deadly antagonism, but the claims of the two are not seen to be in harmony. 'There is one fact,' says Dr. Fairbairn, who is by no means an alarmist, 'we cannot well over-rate,—the state of conflict or mental schism in which every devout man, who is also a man of culture feels himself compelled more or less consciously to live. . . His mind is an arena in which two conceptions struggle for the mastery, and the struggle seems so deadly as to demand the death of the one for the life of the other, faith sacrificed to knowledge, or knowledge to faith.' Newman Smyth, in his recent work on 'Old Faiths in New Light,' tells us that many who do not proclaim their doubts on the housetops are yet 'hiding them in their hearts,' and eagerly seeking for more and clearer light. If this be the state of mind in which men of culture, who are also men of faith, habitually

live, what must be the condition of many inquirers, who have none of the strength and stability that come from either wide culture or deep faith? We must fully admit the existence of conflict, and do our best to explain that it arises *rather from ignorance than from truly scientific knowledge*. Nor may this ignorance be confined to one side only; it may be common to both, and can only be removed on the one hand by a fuller trust, and on the other by deeper and more patient inquiry.

Popular lecturers on the Sceptical side often do great injury to faith by the way in which they deal with the history of this 'conflict.' According to them, the antagonism has arisen from first to last from an essential incompatibility between the rival claims, and throughout victory has been with science; the upholders and expounders of religion, like the pioneers or 'squatters' of civilization, have ever had to give place to the 'new settlers' of a higher order of life. 'Faith,' it is said, and faith is the soul of all religious life, 'is in its nature unchangeable, stationary; science is in its nature progressive; and eventually a divergence between them, impossible to conceal, takes place.' The results of such a divergence may easily be predicted. The human mind must grow, and its growth is the index-measure of the progress of science. Hence, say these chroniclers of progress, religion has had, from age to age, to give place before its determined rival. They could not well divide the land between them, for science demanded more than faith could grant. There was, therefore, advance on the one side, and resistance on the other, but victory has ever been the fortune of the one, and defeat the fate of the other. Geographer, astronomer, anatomist, chemist, geologist, and biologist, have by turns assailed, and have been resisted, but in the end all the positions first taken up have been abandoned. To-day we see the same struggle, and we can, without misgiving, predict the result. No longer has religion in its service the rack, the thumbscrew, and the stake, no longer can it invoke the aid of powerful princes and strong armies in its deadly struggle; its spirit is, however, the same, and the arguments it uses much the same as were the arguments of its first champions. Just as

religious geography had to give place to truer and more accurate ideas of the earth's size and shape, just as the astronomy of the Church had to give place to the astronomy of science, so the cosmogonies, theologies, and ethics of our day must give place before Darwin's new 'Book of Genesis,' and Spencer's new 'Data of Ethics!'¹ Such representations of this conflict are very plausible; they win the ear of the crowds, and they find support in popular books written by learned professors of physical science. But 'still it moves!' Still religion lives, and sways with more power than ever the best minds of the age! Its voice is heard by the most thoughtful, its essential truth recognised by some who rejoice in the name of 'Freethinkers;' the grasp of moral law on the conscience is to-day firmer than ever, and the most determined Iconoclasts of the time are eagerly seeking for some 'ideal substitutes for God;' in order to keep its hold on its most enthusiastic votaries, science must provide for them a religion!

Two remarks may be made on this aspect of the conflict. *First*, we must frankly and fully acknowledge whatever of truth there is at the basis of these popular representations, perhaps we might say misrepresentations. We admit that religious men have often taken up false positions that afterwards have had to be abandoned. *Hence they have appeared to lose what never really belonged to them.* In political life we have many illustrations of the extreme folly of defending abuses. The zealous reformer attacks some cherished institution which he sees to be out of harmony with the spirit of the age, and perhaps inimical to the best interests of the people. The timid, fearful lest in his overzeal the reformer may touch other interests and institutions specially dear to them, defend the evil as well as the good, and, so defending, they not seldom lose all. Had they united with the reformer to destroy what was ready to perish, they might have

¹ This is very much the view given by Dr. Draper in his work on the 'Conflict between Religion and Science'—a work, by the way, altogether unworthy of any place in a 'Scientific Series.' It is full of interesting information, but often most unfair in its representations. A much fairer view is given by Dr. White, another American, in his essay on the 'Warfare of Science.'

received his help in conserving what was worthy to live. They stood up for all, bad and good, and they lost all.¹ So in connection with religious life and thought. Looking back upon these bitter conflicts of the past, we can easily see the unwise policy of many brave and good men, who considered themselves the only friends of Religion. They failed to distinguish between the essence and some of the accidents of religion, between the faiths and hopes lying at the basis of all piety, and the mere opinions, theologies, and beliefs of devout men. We can now join in the laugh against the preacher, who applied to the astronomers of his age the text, 'Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?' It may be doubted whether, in our conflicts with unbelief, we are one whit more exegetical than he was in the study of our Bibles: we may be much less perturbed by the teachings of geology than were some of our fathers, we can perhaps afford to give a more liberal interpretation to the 'days' of Genesis than they did; we are not more eager than they were to receive into our minds and apply to our beliefs, scientific conceptions of the world that are unfamiliar to us. The grand lesson from many of these past conflicts, that we must not treat our Bibles as if they were authorised text-books of science issued by the Fellows of the Royal Society, we are as slow to learn as were the religious men of past ages. The sooner we learn that the science of the Bible is Salvation, that the diligent seeker is there to find not the Biological, Astronomical, or Political creed of the hour, but the 'Record of God's Redeeming Purpose,' and the story of how the sinner may find new life and fellowship with God, the better both for Religion and Science. Religious men must be held largely responsible for the misrepresentations of which we have given examples. By dogmatic theories of inspiration, by strong and unguarded utterances about the *moral* meaning of this or that doctrine of science, by too ready use of denunciatory language, and the indiscriminate employment of the words 'Infidel,' 'Atheist,' and the like, they have irritated men who loved know-

¹ Recent legislation will illustrate this. How much evil might have been averted had an Irish Land Act been passed a generation sooner, as many clear-sighted reformers demanded!

ledge, and they have alienated many who desired liberty to follow truth wherever it seemed to lead them. Under the influence of these feelings of irritation and alienation, seekers after wisdom have perhaps passed into positions of sharper antagonism, and spoken words that were not likely to heal the breach between them and men of faith.

A *second* remark is equally necessary : While fully admitting the responsibility and confessing the sins of religious men, we by no means wish it to be understood that they alone are guilty in this matter. The votaries of science must take their share, and that is more than an equal share of responsibility. This remark applies chiefly to the Scientists of our own day. The noble men of the past, who were often persecuted by the Church, cannot be charged with hostility to Religion. Many of them were most devout, and in their contentions on behalf of truth, were thinking quite as much of the cause of Religion as of the interests of Science. It has been left to the Scientists of our age, men on whose behalf the very 'stars in their courses' have been fighting, to seek advantage by mere appeals to vulgar prejudice and ignorance. Moreover, they forget, in these tirades of theirs against religious men, that many of the conceptions of the universe, against which they so loudly protest, were themselves the creations of Science rather than of Religion. 'They seldom remember that Science has known, still knows, how to persecute, that cultured and pagan Athens could be as merciless to free inquiry and thought as Christian and Catholic Rome. If they become historians, they become eloquent over the intellectual immobility of the Middle Ages, but silent as to its daring and subtle and even Sceptical thought. They praise Copernicus and Gassendi, but fail to indicate what relation Religion and the Church had to their studies. They narrate the conquests of Science as if they had been victories over *Theology and not over ignorance*. The antiquated and false views of nature which old divines maintained, and, because old, could not but maintain, are gravely represented as essential to religion, almost identical with it, and are no less gravely classified and exhibited as exploded religious doctrines, rather than as what they are,

exploded conceptions of nature, necessarily, indeed, interwoven with the religious as well as other thought of the time, but as form, not as matter.¹ It has been clearly demonstrated that the conceptions of the world called religious, and so much ridiculed by modern Scientists, are no part of the essence even of Bible teachings, not to say of religion. They arose in Greece rather than Judæa, were the product of that thought which did so much to create science, rather than of the great men who have laid the foundation of universal religion,—the prophets of Israel. Modern men of science sneer at theological ignorance, and bid the preacher keep to his own sphere; wise advice, truly, but coming with bad grace from biologists and physiologists, who pronounce most authoritatively on the meaning of a ‘record,’ which they show no signs of having carefully studied! Why should we suppose that the Bible is less worthy of serious and careful study than other books? Our men of science study Shakespeare with great care. They give us minute analyses of his characters and painstaking comparisons of his different plays; is the Bible so very worthless that it should be read so differently, and with so little anxiety to find out its real meaning? We have already complained of the careless way in which Mr. Mill and Miss Martineau think proper to deal with this book, and this is characteristic of the whole school. Mr. Spencer speaks of the God of religion as a ‘Man-like Artificer,’ of his working like a ‘workman shaping a piece of furniture,’ and other Agnostics follow in the same path. Worse still, they associate these and such-like crudities with the very essence of the religious conception of the universe, and assume that Christians are fully committed to them; it is hardly necessary to remind a careful reader of the Psalms and the Prophetic works that these ideas are foreign to the Bible conception of Jehovah.

Such critics forget the *slow development of the human mind*, and the great influence of the past over present ideas. They are constantly reminding us of man’s dependence on circumstances, of his relation to his ‘environment,’ and yet they seem to expect that modern scientific conceptions should have sprung full grown

¹ Dr. Fairbairn.

from the mind of the Middle Ages. Both men of science and men of religion are children of their time, and they must not be held responsible for ideas that are common to all who live under certain conditions. If a great Naturalist like Darwin found it so hard to shake his mind free from certain conceptions of creation, why should we expect the religious men of either present or past ages, men whose work is so very different, to possess greater receptivity to new and strange influences? If, in this matter, we felt disposed to make use of the *tu-quoque* argument, there is no lack of opportunity. Let anyone carefully study the relations of the scientific men of our day to the temperance question, and ample proof will be found that *intellectual immobility* is no exclusive property of theological natures. Surely men of science should have been the first to see, and to proclaim to their fellows, the nature and uses of alcohol, and yet, so far was this from being the case that they were the last to learn and to acknowledge truths now the property of School-Board children. The sons of toil have in this movement been considerably ahead of both scientists and theologians, and later researches of men of science have but confirmed the wisdom of their policy.¹

Passing from these and other aspects of the question, let us try to see whether, after all, there be any real conflict between the teachings of science and the truths of religion. Before we can say whether religion and science are really opposed, we must get at something like clear ideas of their separate provinces and respective aims. The term religion is wider in its meaning than the term Christianity, inasmuch as there may be, and is, true religious feeling where there is no knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must affirm the universality of the religious instinct or faculty, or whatever it may be termed, in man; wherever we find human beings we find in germ, at least, or

¹ Not that *science* had no representative here. For many years, Dr. F. R. Lees, a man familiar, as few are, with the methods of truly scientific research, and faithful, as few have been, to the great *law of causation*, was formulating and teaching the truth about alcohol. We refer to the acknowledged leaders in science,—they *followed* here, and certainly cannot be said to have led the way.

potentially, all the elements essential to religious experience. This may be, has been, hotly disputed ; it may be said that there are tribes of men in whose language there is no word to express the idea of God. Nothing is more apt to be misleading than arguments about names applied to, or withheld from, the Supreme Being. The religious instinct may exist where language is too poor to express all that it implies. If such tribes there be, we shall, with Dr. Conder, call them 'detached fragments of the human race . . . no more to be cited as samples of man's moral and intellectual nature, than the tenants of the lazar-house are to be taken as models of his bodily nature.'¹ Whatever names man may give to the object of his homage, whatever poverty of ideas or attributes he may exhibit, it is none the less true that he must worship ; wherever we find man, no matter how degraded or how exalted, he has the instinct of dependence, and the consciousness, whether faint or vivid, of higher than merely human relations.

We shall not attempt to define what constitutes religion, or the religious instinct. Almost any of the definitions usually offered will serve our purpose equally well : we may say with Flint that 'Religion is man's communion with what he believes to be his God or gods ;' or with Conder, that it is the 'sum total of man's belief, emotion, and conduct with respect to God ;' or with Fairbairn, that 'an object of worship, a Being worthy of love and reverence, in other words, a God, is necessary to religion.' The essential idea contained in, and expressed by, these and other definitions, is that man has relations with the divine ; that just as by his sense-experience he is related to a world about him, to which he belongs and of which he forms a part, just as by his mental life he belongs to an in-

¹ 'Basis of Faith,' Lecture I. Mr. Horne reminds us, 'Reason and Revelation,' p. 89, that there are known to naturalists animals whose powers of sight under favourable conditions are good, yet who lose them, while to all outward appearance the organ remains perfect. He suggests that the same law may be at work in connection with man's spiritual faculty. The absence, therefore, of all 'consciousness of God' among certain tribes of men, if such there be, may simply be the absence of the necessary conditions for the exercise of the spiritual faculty, potential in all men.

tellectual community, so by his spiritual nature, and on the side of this highest part of his complex being, he is related to an unseen but real world, to the Power manifested through all nature, and, above all, through the moral and spiritual in humanity. These relations, together with the experiences, beliefs, acts of homage, and habits of life to which they give rise, and of which they are the explanation, form what we term man's religious life. Obviously, the outward forms of his homage, and the inward feelings and emotions expressed by language, must differ according as man fully knows, or only blindly gropes after, the object of his worship, the Power awaking in his nature these aspirations and experiences. Hence the manifestations of religious experience will appear under forms exceedingly unlike, according to man's mental and moral condition.

What is science? Simply man's accurate orderly knowledge of the world in which he lives, moves, and has his being. Its regulative principle is the 'law of continuity.' Men of science seek amid diversity an underlying identity. They believe, to use the words of the authors of the 'Unseen Universe,' that the Author of the universe will not put them to 'permanent intellectual confusion.' They believe that nature is orderly, however apparently chaotic, and hence they ever seek for the laws, the uniformities, in harmony with which events are taking place. 'Nature is a spectacle continually exhibited to our senses, in which phenomena are mingled in combinations of endless variety and novelty. Wonder fixes the mind's attention; memory stores up a record of each distinct impression; the powers of association bring forth the record when the like is felt again. By the higher faculties of judgment and reasoning the mind compares the new with the old, recognises essential identity, even when disguised by diverse circumstances, and expects to find again what was before experienced.'¹ The man of science then, whatever his department of inquiry, seeks unity amid diversity. Believing that the universe is a cosmos, and not a chaos, believing that it is an orderly whole, he is ever in

¹ Jevons.

quest of law, and harmony, and identity.¹ When we take this general view of the provinces alike of religion and science, there does not seem any real principle of conflict or even of rivalry between them. If the man of faith believes, as believe he must, that behind all variety there is a true, though perchance, hidden unity, if he believes that the universe is no mere fortuitous concourse of atoms, but the 'life-dwelling of an eternal mind,' if he believes that behind all phenomena there is an all-wise, and all-good Power, working out a purpose of love, why should he fear any evil from the closest scrutiny of the man of science? On the other hand, why should the scientist be jealous of the beliefs, emotions, and acts of homage of the man of faith? From one standpoint, indeed, he may say, with one of his own order, that science is neither Christian nor un-Christian, but that it is *extra-Christian*.

A modern writer has said, somewhat irreverently, that of old the heavens declared the glory of God, but that now they declare the glory of Newton! The remark shows the bias and narrowness of the speaker's view, and illustrates one of the dangers of our time. We can all sympathize with the bewilderment of the boy, who declared, after hearing Faraday's description of the chemical composition of a tear, that he would no longer care for his mother's weeping! The boy overlooked the important fact that his teacher had only given the *chemical side of the question*, and had in no way described the moral constituents of the tears shed; so when the devout Psalmist looked up, saw the starry heavens, and felt his spirit awed by the impressions suggested by this magnificent spectacle, it is quite true that he was ignorant of the Newtonian philosophy; it is not true that Newton has robbed our spirits of this same spiritual message. If this were so, then, indeed, there would be conflict between religion and science. The best reply to such sneers,

¹ 'Science has for its sphere or province the whole field of outward observation, and has for its purpose the explanation of facts within this field, either by means of direct observations as to the relations of things, or by logical inference from such observations.'—*Calderwood*. 'The perfect form of knowledge is science.'—*Bain*.

is to say that, in such cases, the eye brings with it what it sees. Kepler declared, when he discovered the law of the planetary bodies, that 'God had thought, and he had thought His thoughts after Him.' Newton himself was a devout worshipper, and saw in the heavens not his own glory, but the glory of his Creator. The 'majestic spectacle' of the starry heavens was not given to us by Newton, and if he helped us to understand it better, he did but add to the wonder with which devout minds must ever gaze upon it. The vision of the Psalmist is one for the 'pure in heart,' whether peasant or sage, a vision only for those who bring with them a sense of dependence upon, and a reverence for, the Power behind all stars and suns and systems.¹

The man of science is too ready to forget that religion is very largely independent of what alone he terms knowledge. Along with crass ignorance of the teachings of science, along with the most childish conceptions of the nature of the physical universe, along with grotesque ideas about the 'reign of law,' there may coexist much reverence for the Supreme Power. 'Nowadays religion is mingled necessarily with what we may consider as not strictly religious. A man of undoubted piety may give expression to the veriest crudity in speculation, but his religion is distinct from that. . . . Great spiritual progress is not incompatible with a backward state of scientific thought.'² We must beware of making true religion a species of Gnosticism, or of confounding it with theological knowledge. Scientists ridicule the simple believer who prays for this or that ; they say if he knew more of the laws of nature he could not, even assuming his own position to be the correct one, ask God to do for him what is clearly contrary to His method of

¹ The beautiful words of James Martineau, in reply to the Materialist's demand for a brain and nervous system to the Supreme Mind, are applicable here : 'You need an embodied mind? Lift up your eyes, and look upon the arch of night as the brow of the Eternal, its constellations as the molecules of the universal consciousness, its space as their possibility of change, and the ethereal waves as the afferents and efferents of Omniscent Thought.'—*'Modern Materialism.'*

² Horne, 'Reason and Revelation.'

acting. They say it is like asking God to 'make water run up-hill,' and they scornfully repeat Pope's question about gravitation ceasing, etc. But if this is all they know of such matters, it were perhaps well for them to remember the poet's words :

'Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
Her early heaven, her happy views ;
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.'

Take the essence of the religious idea about God,—that He is Father as well as Creator and Ruler, and that like as a Father pitieth his children, so God will deal with those who love and trust Him ; if this be the truly religious idea of God, surely it must be evident that *a simple believer may ask all that is in his heart without either irreverence or absurdity*, seeing that, in every asking, he acknowledges his ignorance, and submits his will to the higher and wiser Will ; his prayer must be judged in its inner spirit and not by its outward form alone. True, as the petitioner knows more of God, and of the laws that regulate life, he may modify the form of his petitions, may even cease to ask for certain things he asked before ; this is only saying that when we become men we put away 'childish things,' in religion as in other matters. How infinitely beyond this conception of things, and how truly philosophical, is the simple view of prayer given by St. Paul, when he tells his converts *in everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let their requests be made known unto God, and when he assures them that in so doing, the peace of God shall guard their hearts and minds ! The prayer of the devout Scientist, the man who 'knows a thousand things,' may appear to an angel, if only angels know such things, more childish than the simple man's prayers at present appear to some of the wise men of our time.

Moreover, men of science, who ignore the deepest aspirations of man's spiritual nature, and who forbid, in the name of 'uniformity of nature,' the simplest utterances of devout hearts, must not be allowed to forget what has been so well said by Professor Jevons about this very subject.¹ 'Before a rigorous logical

¹ See preface to 'The Principles of Science.'

scrutiny,' he says, 'the Reign of Law will prove to be an unverified hypothesis, the uniformity of nature an ambiguous expression, and the certainty of our scientific inferences to a great extent a delusion.' Professors of physical science adopt the devout vein in some of their discussions; they tell us to 'lower our heads' and acknowledge our ignorance. They are also not unwilling to term the 'will of God' our 'asylum of ignorance,' and to suggest that this is only a device for making us forget where and what we are. True religion ever inculcates reverence for the unseen, but *how can we truly reverence unless we fully know, or unless we have real, even if inadequate, knowledge?* We cannot lower our heads before Newton; such homage would degrade both worshipper and worshipped; we cannot worship the Unknowable, and the Unknown might be Devil instead of God. To a religious nature the 'will of God' is anything but an asylum of ignorance, for its God is perfect goodness, and His will the energy of infinite love.

There is, so far as we are able to see, no incompatibility between devotion to science and true religious faith and life. Taking the very lowest ground, before there can be any religion at all there must be faith in the existence and goodness of God. Religion demands an object of homage, and hence Theism in some sort is necessary to the full expression of the religious feeling. Science has not, as yet, abolished this rational faith. The authors of 'The Unseen Universe,' both distinguished in science, start their argument with the assumption that God exists,—God the 'Creator and Upholder of all things,' and this they call an 'absolutely self-evident' truth! What one scientist considers *absolutely self-evident*, another must not be permitted to consider an absurdity. It may be said, and it is often said, that the scientists of our time are going further and further from this position, and that it will soon be difficult to find a scientist who accepts the Christian religion. This is an entirely false idea. Why do our men of science, even when claiming the right to adopt the Materialistic standpoint, and to argue as if the known forces of life were sufficient to account for all we see and know, persistently refuse to be called Atheists? Why do they refuse

to be called by a name which, whatever other associations it may have, would most effectually separate them from any chance of Theistic contamination? Simply because, at bottom, they have not rejected the Theistic view of things. They may be at war with many aspects of Theism; they may reject certain forms of the Theistic hypothesis; but they do not yet avow themselves Atheists, and they shrink from this avowal, because they know that it would be irrational,—really a giving up of all hope of intellectual unity.

Many of the fears expressed on the one hand by religious men, and many of the boasts uttered by men of science on the other, arise from ignoring an important distinction between the opinions of scientists and the authoritative teachings of science. Some of the, so-called, cases of conflict we shall examine more carefully afterwards; meanwhile, let us emphasise the distinction between opinion and fact. There are fashions in opinion as well as in dress. Witness the change of opinion as to the properties, medicinal and other, of alcohol! Time was when, both as a beverage and as a medicine, this was considered a *sine quâ non*; now all experts have given up the beverage argument, and not a few eminent authorities declare that they see no great benefit to be derived, if any, from alcohol in medicine. The next generation may witness other revolutions of opinion equally great.¹ It is the fashion now to sneer at theology, and to say that all the leading men of science are opposed to Christianity. Professor Tait has most effectually pricked this bubble. 'When we ask,' says Tait, 'of any *competent* authority who were the "advanced," the "best," and the "ablest" scientific thinkers of the immediate past (in Britain), we cannot but receive for answers such names as Brewster, Faraday, Forbes, Graham, Rowan Hamilton, Herschel, and Talbot. This must be the case, unless we use the word science in a perverted sense. Which of these great men gave up the idea that nature evidences a designing Mind? But perhaps Mr. Froude refers to the advanced thinkers still

¹ See 'Temperance Text-Book,' by Dr. F. R. Lees; also 'Doctors, Drugs, and Drinks,' by same author, etc., and Richardson's 'Diseases of Modern Life,' etc.

happily alive amongst us. The names of the foremost among them are not far to seek. But, unfortunately for his assertion, it is quite certain that Andrews, Joule, Clerk Maxwell, Balfour-Stewart, Stokes, William Thomson, and such-like, have, each and all of them, when the opportunity offered itself, spoken in a sense altogether different from that implied in Mr. Froude's article. Surely there are no truly scientific thinkers in Britain further advanced than these !¹ To such a list, one of the names, alas ! no longer among the living, Professor Tait's own name must be added ; nor is there, so far as we can judge, any valid reason for excluding from such a list the name of Charles Darwin. He was never an Atheist, never denied the evidences of a 'designing Mind ;' and, indeed, as we shall see, wrote his great works from the stand-point of Theism.

To such arguments, and to such evidence, our opponents reply that many hold a kind of double creed, and that they have never attempted to harmonise their scientific beliefs with their religious creeds. The argument is plausible,—has a limited application perhaps,—but it is far from conclusive ; moreover, its applications are wider than those who employ it seem to be aware. It may be true that Faraday, for example, never troubled to co-relate his scientific and religious beliefs ; it may also be true that, if Herbert Spencer were to explicitly unfold all that is implicitly contained in his beliefs about the Unknown Power, he would cease to call Theism unthinkable. Certain it is that, to many Christian thinkers, the *Trinity* seems to be the articulate, if but imperfect, expression of that existence which Spencer says is as far above mere personality, as this is above certain forms of fetichism. It is also certain that, in even *Agnostic* theories, many see profound truths. Looking at life from the scientific stand-point alone, and refusing to listen to the testimony that comes from other quarters, say they, what can we find but Agnosticism ? Science, dealing as it ever must, with phenomena, their laws and sequences, can never lead men to that which is beyond and above them all.²

¹ See *International Review* for November, 1878, cited in Flint's 'Anti-Theistic Theories,' p. 485.

² 'The idea of God has no place in it (*i.e.* sense-given experience), and,

Inferences from the finite may, but also may not, lead men to the Infinite ; and just as many devout souls never think of following some of their spiritual conceptions to any ultimate result, just as they are willing to rest satisfied with *practical* issues, so many Scientists are unwilling to own their ignorance, to lower their heads, to open their eyes, and to welcome a higher light than that which shines on the realms with which they concern themselves.

There remain for us, then, those general truths about both religion and science, in which the heart may securely rest. Perhaps even here we do not sufficiently recognise our ignorance. The modern dogmatist argues from ignorance to knowledge in the most daring and, as it appears to us, unscientific fashion. 'You do not really know anything fully,' he says ; 'all our knowledge ends in mystery. Take the commonest bit of chalk, the tiniest leaf, the most insignificant insect, and these will raise more questions than science can ever hope to answer.' True, indeed ! but what follows ? Not, surely, that we are to accept the creed of Materialism, and refuse to attribute any real existence and power to mind, because we cannot fully explain its ultimate relation to matter ? Because we cannot explain *this*, that is no reason why we should either deny or affirm *that*. This were indeed to take refuge in an asylum of ignorance. Not the 'Will of God,' for, according to the religious view, this contains in it the promise and potency of all things, but the ignorance of man, is the ground of our difficulty.

Rather let us be patient, and have faith in truth. If the universe be really the abode of an infinite mind, if mind be superior to, and distinct from, matter, as the harper from his harp, if thought, and not molecular movement, must after all interpret life, if the spiritual history and experiences of the race are as real and as essential as the sense-experiences with which science

as a consequence, has no place in pure science.'—*Horne*. See on this subject Horne's chapter on 'Ancient and Modern Theism,' in his work already named ; also Fairbairn's essay on 'Theism and Scientific Speculation,' in his 'Studies in Philosophy,' etc.

ever deals, then let us have faith in the ultimate harmony of all knowledge and the unity of all truth. Our ignorance must not only be acknowledged in words, but in deeds ; it must make us humble in heart, and also make us keep to work within our range. Because some of the grand schemes of reconciliation have failed, because some dogmatic scientists assert, and some timid religionists believe, that the antagonism is essential and cannot be resolved, we must not be afraid. 'The man who can so unite the physical and metaphysical ideas now apparently so conflicting, unite them so as to evolve a conception of the universe that shall satisfy both science and religion, will be,' says Dr. Fairbairn, 'the greatest Prophet of the Eternal modern times has known.' Until this true Prophet appears, let us distrust all mere patchwork-systems of reconciliation, and all mere absorption theories, and let us wait for further and clearer light. Knowledge is yet but partial, and the partial is here ever the most dangerous. The method of Science seems to us profoundly religious and worthy of all acceptance by men of faith. '*There is only one state of mind which is truly and profoundly reverent and religious, and that is the desire to find facts as they are.*'¹ In his essay on the 'Warfare of Science,' Dr. White seems to us to have made good his thesis, that 'in all modern history, interference with science in the supposed interest of religion, no matter how conscientious such interference may have been, has resulted in the direst evils both to religion and to science—and invariably. And, on the other hand, all untrammelled scientific investigation, no matter how dangerous to religion some of its stages may have seemed for the time to be, has invariably resulted in the highest good of religion and of science.' This being so, may we not conclude, with Dr. Conder,² that 'the only possible reconciliation is for religious men to understand and accept the truths of science ; and for scientific men to understand and accept the truths of Religion'? Only by having due regard to all the facts can we hope to form any true and abiding philosophy of life.

¹ Newman Smyth.

² 'Basis of Faith.'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE—MIRACLES.

‘The essence of Christianity lies in a miracle ; and if it can be shown that a miracle is either impossible or incredible, all further inquiry into the details of its history is superfluous in a religious point of view.’—B. F. WESTCOTT.

‘That one face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows.’

R. BROWNING.

‘The uniformity of Nature, as under natural law expressing the will of the Creator, is as certain a dogma of the Scriptures as of science.’—PRINCIPAL DAWSON.

HITHERTO we have been considering some of the more general aspects of this alleged conflict between religion and science. We have assumed that religion is as universal as reason itself, and that wherever we find human beings we find, at least, the rudiments of religious life, and the germ, so to speak, of the spiritual faculty. We have further seen that, according to the men who have the greatest claim to a hearing, men who can speak on behalf of science as well as faith, there is no necessary antagonism between *what is really known, and science is true knowledge, and the elementary beliefs of religion*. This being so, we plead for peace and co-operation instead of suspicion, strife, and debate. Let religious men do justice to the claims, to the method, and to the results of science ; let scientists do justice to the teachings of religion, and let them honour the spiritual aspirations and ideals of man ; then, in the good time coming, when not only knowledge, but reverence and religion shall have grown greater and purer and truer, it will be found that the

alleged foes were friends in disguise,¹ and that the conflict arose from lack of knowledge or from lack of generosity of spirit. At this stage we can imagine an objector saying, 'Such a view may be possible, even desirable, so long as we keep to the vaguer aspects of this question. The old view, that religion was a mere invention of scheming priesthods, we frankly give up. Nowadays, men of science are anxious to support religion; they affirm the universality of the religious instinct, and they wish to see the progressive development of man's spiritual nature. This, however, applies only to the most general view of the case; they admit the necessity and the utility of reverence for the unknown Power behind all phenomena, and they are anxious to find a scientific basis for the Religion of the Future. The moment you go beyond this, whenever you substitute for the vague term religion, the definite terms Bible-religion or Christianity, the old feelings arise, and conflict there must be. To take only a few of the outstanding illustrations of this,—the points at which conflict reaches its maximum intensity in the present day: science affirms the uniformity of nature, and the existence everywhere of law; the Bible, on the other hand, is a record of miracles, of constant interruptions of the natural order, and of interference by an arbitrary will in the supposed interests of man, or of select men. Science tells us that both things and persons are what they are, and where they are, because of a long process of orderly evolution; the Bible says they all owe their origin to the will and act of a Creator at a definite point of time. Science tells us that man descended from some ape-like ancestor at a period infinitely remote from the present, that he started life a naked, perhaps a hairy, savage, innocent alike of any instinct of reverence and of any sense of shame; the Bible teaches that he was made out of clay by a 'man-like

¹ Fairbairn says: 'When fair-haired Saxon and tawny Hindu met on the sultry plains of India, with hate inspired by antagonistic religions and aims, who could have believed that their fathers had once herded their flocks together, watched the rising and setting of the sun, and the "immeasurable heavens break open to their highest, and all the stars shine"?' Perhaps the future historian of the bitter conflict between religion and science may be able to write in the same way!

Artificer,' and that, at the moment of his creation he was a sinless, an intelligent, and indeed, a perfect being, made in the image of God, his Creator and Father. Science assures us that there are traces of his presence on the earth probably hundreds of thousands of ages ago; the Bible allows for his life on earth, at the very longest, only a few thousand years. Not to dwell on the essential doctrines of Bible-religion, or of Christianity, not to discuss such themes as the Fall of man, the Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection of Christ, not to mention certain theories of inspiration and claims put forward on behalf of the Bible, how can we either pretend to find, or to make, anything approaching to harmony in claims so antagonistic ?

We have no desire to make away with, or even unduly to minimize, these and other similar difficulties ; nor shall we venture to say that honest doubts are impossible in connection with such points. We have stated the objections very much as they are often stated by the more moderate opponents of Christianity, by men, who, while they may be biassed to some extent against the claims of the Bible, have no particular desire to over-state matters or to create needless difficulties.

The best way of dealing with such objections is to allow frankly, in the first case, that there is seeming antagonism ; there is sometimes a dexterity manifested by apologists, in denying all difficulty, worthy of a better cause, but which seldom helps the cause of faith. Let it be candidly admitted, that many parts of the problem seem at present incapable of full solution with the means at our disposal ; let us give those who say they are compelled to reject traditional solutions credit for the sincerity they profess ; let us avoid all needless dogmatism, whether on the one side or the other, and be content to wait for further and better knowledge before taking up positions that may be found untenable. The Christian has two strongholds at such a time,—two, we say, but these are ultimately one and the same. He has faith in truth, can await with quietness and confidence any amount of keenest scrutiny and thorough investigation, knowing that these will only manifest truth all the more ; he has also confidence in the essential facts of

spiritual experience, knowing the certainty of these, and knowing that they confirm and illustrate the teachings of Holy Scripture.¹ However much men may object to certain *theological explanations of Biblical doctrines*, it cannot be denied that the experience of the New Testament believers illustrates, and we may say necessitates, many of the Old Testament pre-suppositions said to be violently antagonistic to science. The universal sinfulness of man used to be denied by the 'Free-thinkers' of the time, the 'Fall of man,' 'Original Sin,' and the like, were said to be mere figments of the theological imagination; now even Agnostics are obliged to admit the facts lying at the basis of such dogmas, and of which they are, probably, the very faulty and imperfect expression. The pages of Spencer, and Mill, and Maudsley, the doctrines of heredity, taught now in the name of science, may be considered better reading than the pages of Calvin and others; they not seldom assert, with even greater emphasis and assurance, a doctrine of original sin.²

The time has not yet come for perfect reconciliation; older harmonies have had to be given up, although they did good service, in their day, and the wise thinker will exercise patience rather than commit himself to positions that may have to be abandoned. On both sides there is needed patient investigation, rather than hasty generalization and dogmatic utterance.

One of the most recent works on the 'Bible and Science' has come from the side of the evolutionist school. It will satisfy neither side, and it adds little to our stock of knowledge. The author seems to have made up his mind to be general in his treatment, and so he takes a wide survey, dealing with everything in heaven and earth, from the geography of Palestine and the method of Divine Revelation, down to the best ways of

¹ 'The spiritual consciousness has as much right to begin with the fact of the divine or supernatural, as the physical philosopher with the fact of the natural.'—Horne, 'Reason and Revelation,' p. 35.

² 'The doctrine of hereditary corruption is so far from being contradictory to modern ideas, that it may be said to be a direct corollary from the doctrine of evolution.'—Tulloch, 'The Christian Doctrine of Sin,' p. 177.

training children and checking the progress of intemperance.¹ Had the work come from any theologian of eminence, the professors of biology and physics would have written smart articles in leading reviews, exposing the unwisdom and incompetence of its author. Seeing that a 'brother' has written it, they hold their peace. In truth, the best apologists are least anxious to enter this field of debate; they are themselves patient students of the methods and results of science, anxious to know all that can be known, so that they may guide the thoughts of their fellows. What is most needed in our time is a thorough discussion of *first principles*. Details, whether on the one side or the other, must give place to this; harmonies of the Bible and science will follow in due course when men are agreed as to the nature of all knowledge, the methods of science, the true principle of Bible interpretation, the true meaning and proper sphere of revelation. Let our great thinkers confine their attention to these deep problems, and they will best serve the cause alike of science and religion.

The question of man's antiquity may safely be left in abeyance at present. On neither side is there anything like unanimity of opinion on this subject. Bible students are not satisfied that they have an authoritative Scripture chronology, and even if they were, other and deeper questions arise. In what sense are we to take these Scripture numbers? Is a definite chronology any essential part of the content of revelation? Is this demand for a *revealed chronology* only another aspect of the old doctrine, that the Bible is a text-book of science as well as a record of God's redeeming purpose? Those who are troubled with doubts, and who seek true peace of mind, must not concern themselves with mere details and surface meanings; they must go to the foundation in all such matters. They must not allow the opponents of the Bible to be its authorised interpreters, nor must they assume that the first meaning that occurs

¹ See the 'Bible and Science,' by T. Lauder Brunton, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.S., etc. It ought to be said that, in addition to the already mentioned topics, Dr. Brunton discusses cookery classes, the rainfall, weather and the death-rate, etc.

to them, as they hurriedly read the record, is the correct one ; if students of nature have to listen so attentively for her *whispered secrets*, have to work so long and so patiently on the problems that arise, the students of the record must not be satisfied with clever guesses and off-hand readings.

On the other side, too, there is a growing tendency to attach less importance to some of the alleged evidences from a high antiquity of man ; scientists are not now speaking quite so dogmatically about the date of man's first appearance on the earth. They differ widely as to the number of years that are necessary, one authority giving 120,000 as the minimum, another, perhaps, suggesting that 10,000 or 20,000 may be sufficient, while a third, more truly scientific, may remind us that *fixing dates is no part of the work of science*. According to Professor W. Boyd Dawkins, there is 'no satisfactory evidence in the new or old worlds of the existence of man in the incalculably remote Pliocene age.' Dr. Dawson, whose authority no one will question, says : 'The earliest certain indications of the presence of man in Europe, Asia, or America, so far as yet known, belong to the modern period alone. That man may have existed previously no one need deny, but no one can positively affirm on any ground of fact.' Commenting on the geological aspect of this whole question, Principal Dawson thinks 'the tide is decidedly turning as to the antiquity of man, as well as with reference to the origin of species.'¹ It may be said that the geologist's evidence is by no means the strongest to-day, and that from other and entirely independent quarters there come indications of a high antiquity ; we can only reply that some of these proofs are so uncertain, and so much at variance with what is known about the origin and primitive condition of mankind, that we must not build too much upon them. Ethnologists who assume the savage condition of the first man or men, are not likely to be biassed in favour of small numbers, but it yet remains to be proved that man started his journey with the intellectual and spiritual outfit they give him.

¹ See 'Journal of Victoria Institute,' 1881-2 ; also the 'Origin of the World,' by Principal Dawson, F.R.S.

Hence we must accept with much caution evidence largely based on *à priori* grounds.

Our position is simply this : until there are more and stronger proofs than have yet been adduced, believers in Bible religion need not trouble themselves much. After science has collected, arranged, systematised, and co-related all the facts, the real facts, bearing on this question, it will be time enough to attempt a reconsideration of the whole subject. What we do well to affirm constantly is this, that if reverently and honestly conducted, there is no necessary peril to faith in such investigations. Let us know the whole truth, so that we may guide our thought and life thereby ; this is the only safe, and only truly religious position to take up.

A far more pressing, and to many minds far more perturbing inquiry, is that which relates to miracles. There was a time when miracles were considered the chief support of Bible-religion, and there are those still who think the only argument for Christianity necessary, is to point to its miracles and to Old Testament predictions ;¹ these times have passed away, and many find miracles the greatest of all stumbling-blocks in their path.

In the early centuries of Christianity, miracles were not even regarded as wonderful or unusual. Had any saint told his brethren that he had heard heavenly voices, seen unearthly sights, and received communications from the spirit-world, they would have listened with attention, and would probably never have thought of doubting his words. In the Middle Ages, miracles were considered as simple, as common, and as natural, as are answers to prayer in these times by believers in Jesus Christ. Among Roman Catholics in various parts of the world, such a feeling, and such an attitude of mind, may still exist ; but among Protestants, at least, and among many Catholics too, a very different mental attitude has become natural. Men do not expect miracles, and when they hear of alleged miracles

¹ 'I hear your message, but I have not faith,
And miracle is fond faith's favourite child.'

GOETHE—*Faust*.

taking place, they regard such reports with suspicion. This is, we believe, the normal attitude of all intelligent men in this century. We may either regard this state of things with favour or with disapprobation; we may complain of the unreasonableness of the 'scientific bias' against miracle; we may attempt to counteract its influence by what we think truer ideas about Nature and man;—the fact remains the same, that this is the prevailing mental habit among all who have come under the influence of the spirit of the age. Browning's Moor says:

'My own East!
How nearer God we were! He glows above,
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours;
We feel Him, not by painful reason know.
* * * * *
All changes at His instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.
His hand is still engaged upon His world—
Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,
For is not God All-mighty?

So may those who refuse to banish the living God from His own world cry out against the mental attitude to which we refer; but still, they must face the stern fact that *so the modern mind thinks*.¹ Under the influence of the teachings of science, there has grown up amongst us a new conception of the world in which we live. We look upon it as a Kosmos, and as being under law; we have learned to trust to the order and uniformity of Nature, and to base our calculations and expectations on the 'law of continuity,' hence the difficulty we have in accepting miracle as it is often presented to our minds. By a kind of common consent our great teachers have called miracles an 'interruption of this order,' or a 'suspension of this law,' which

¹ According to Lecky, 'Rationalism in Europe,' p. 147, 'the progress of civilization produces invariably a certain tone and habit of thought which makes men recoil from miraculous narratives with an instinctive and immediate repugnance, as though they were essentially incredible, independently of any definite arguments, and in spite of dogmatic teaching.' We may say, 'So much the worse for civilization,' but we ought not to hide from ourselves the fact that such tendencies are at work.

comes to the same thing. The author of 'Supernatural Religion,' for example, bases his whole argument against miracles on this ground. Hume, too, defines miracle as a 'violation of the laws of Nature,' and as Dr. Conder well says, the neck of his objection may be at once broken if we deny the accuracy of his definition. Bring these two ideas together,—the uniformity of Nature, the unvarying order on the one hand, and the violations, interruptions, and suspensions alleged on the other,—and as every one must see, there is conflict, even deadly strife. The most persistent, the strongest force will win the day ; only the 'fittest' here survives, and the fittest conception would appear to be the one that affirms the order and uniformity of nature. Hence miracle¹ is discredited in all minds where science asserts its supremacy.

In addition to this, many have still further helped to prejudice miracles by holding and teaching that their chief use has been to attest the truth of the message given, or to confirm the divine authority of the messenger.² Canon Mozley even complains that Mahomet so ill-understood the philosophy of things, as to think that he could succeed in establishing a religion without having recourse to miracles. One part of the Prophet's work, judged by this standard, would seem to come up to the canon's ideal. Mahomet did not scruple to bring forward alleged divine revelations, when he wished to violate his own law and to take to himself more wives than were allowed to the faithful ! Need we wonder that Mr. Matthew Arnold should bring his batteries of polished wit and refined satire to bear on this position. According to this modern pagan, the argument amounts to this : 'I am a messenger sent from God, and to prove it I will convert this pen into a pen-wiper !' If miracles were nothing more than this view expresses, and if this were even the primary function of miracles, they would hardly survive the shock of such ridicule. But the Bible miracles are not mere conjuring tricks, nor is

¹ That is to say, miracle as above defined.

² 'The fact is, that no mode of conceiving of Christianity so effectually plays into the hands of unbelief as this one.'—Bruce, 'The Chief End of Revelation.' See the chapter on 'The Function of Miracle.'

their chief function that of a simple or elaborate, as the case may be, device to attract attention to message and messenger. Our Lord's word to the sign-seeking people of His day ought to have prevented such a perversion of miracle. When Christ told the people that miracles would not succeed in convincing them where the moral lessons of the Old Testament failed, He surely discredited this theory of miracle. We need not deny that this is a function of miracle. Nicodemus shows by his remark when he came to Jesus by night that a miracle may suggest divine power; but we ought not to elevate what is, at most, secondary, and partly accidental, into the chief element or attribute of miracle.

While the modern bias against miracles may be due, partly, at least, to the partial and even faulty representation of some advocates of miracle, it has other and deeper grounds. Many are making an idol of the conception of Nature to which we have referred, and so worshipping it as to hide from their minds the real facts of the case. There is a mental attitude towards miracle, which is really a begging of the whole question in dispute. Men who are continually crying out against personality and personifications, are themselves guilty of the same offence. *They speak of laws as if they were persons, about Nature as if it were anything else but an abstract idea, a name used to cover ignorance.* These ideas of law, order, continuity, and the like, are but man's more or less successful attempts to observe and to express the antecedents and sequents in Nature and in society. The moment he brings in the idea of *necessity*, or of a 'Reign of Law,' which is absolute, he is introducing a new factor into the problem; one, too, which will demand other explanations than his. Unless we are to accept as science the grossest forms of Atheism and Materialism, we must go behind the phenomena observed and see the Power by which alone they can be rationally accounted for, and of which they are the manifestations. In short, this discussion of miracle leads us back again to the deeper problems of Theism and Atheism, and it cannot be settled by mere assertions about uniformities and laws and the

like. To believe in God, and yet to deny the *possibility* of miracle, is to take away with one hand what we have given with the other ; hence, even the extremest forms of Scepticism admit the possibility of miracle, and only take their stand on the alleged unfitness and insufficiency of the evidence offered.

We come to the other ground on which miracles are rejected,—the ground of their inherent improbability,—and here again we meet with similar difficulty. ‘Probability and improbability are simply subjective factors of belief. They have no measurable objective value.’ What seems to one man in the highest degree probable, to another may appear impossible. What one man accepts at once as being under the circumstances the likeliest thing in the world, another rejects with ridicule as unworthy of serious consideration. ‘The argument against the possible and probable occurrences of miracles thus appears on examination void of scientific value. It rests on two assumptions : either that there is no God, in the sense of an intelligent free agent, at least, as free to control Nature as we are ; or else that there has never been such necessity in human history, or great moral ends in God’s purpose, as would have made it wise, right, and worthy of God to work miracles. Neither of these stupendous assumptions can pretend to show an atom of evidence.’¹

The more we consider, in all its manifold bearings, the modern bias against miracle, the more convinced are we that it arises either from false conceptions of the nature of miracles, or from a view of the universe which is essentially Atheistic. Grant a conception of Nature, such as some of these opponents of miracles assume, and then, indeed, miracle were impossible ; this we can never grant, unless we reject Theism and accept the Materialistic view of things. Even then we should be reading the facts of history and the testimony of experience in accordance with a pre-conceived theory, instead of honestly and patiently seeking to find a solution of the problems of life.

It is not an easy thing so to define miracle as to avoid giving offence on the one hand or on the other. Verbal con-

¹ ‘Basis of Faith,’

troversies are most of all to be deprecated on this important question. Dr. Bushnell, for example, would so define nature as to make man himself, on one side of his being, a supernatural agent. Others object to this, and say that it is absurd to leave human nature out of our ideas about nature. Some see in man's moral freedom a real cause in nature, which is yet no part of what is usually termed nature, and in no sense controlled by its laws; others would make the will of man a mere link in the universal chain of events, and, while they admit freedom, they refuse to make the will, or the man, a cause. To those who speak and think so differently, definitions can hardly be the same; we read meanings into definitions at times, and see in the terms employed what their authors did not intend.

Again, it has been argued, and with reason perhaps, that even if men of science were to witness a genuine miracle, say the coming of a dead man to life, they would yet see nothing miraculous. They would behold sensible events, which might appear capable of explanation by what we term secondary causes; the miracle, according to this view, not being revealed to the senses, being revealed only to the soul that is in fellowship with the Divine in nature. From this standpoint, miracle is a 'Divine fact, perceptible by the spiritual consciousness. The physicist may walk through nature and retrace the steps of history, and in so doing reject the Divine elements that have been found to be given through both to the spiritual consciousness of man. He can only do so, however, by first of all rejecting the fact of the consciousness of the Divine.'¹

Simple people are rather hindered than helped by such views of miracle. They are not familiar enough with distinctions that are subtle, and with meanings so recondite. To them a miracle ever has been, and must remain, a manifestation of supernatural power, and an event not explained by the order of nature with which they are familiar. They do not suppose that laws of nature have been either suspended or violated. They simply see in such events manifestations of superhuman power,

¹ Horne, 'Reason and Revelation.'

for which they cannot account ; more than this, there enters into their idea of miracle another element : they believe that no amount of knowledge of nature and its ordinary laws could, of itself, enable them to explain such events.¹ They do not suppose that any amount of knowledge of the properties of water, on the one hand, or the human body on the other, would enable them to account for Peter's walking on the sea. They look upon these as extraordinary events, to be accounted for on other principles, utterly unintelligible to those holding the Materialistic view of the universe. Nor does there seem to us, in such a view, to be anything either contrary to reason, or contrary to the teachings of science. Why should miracles be considered incredible by any thinking mind? Simple believers in Jesus Christ have no real difficulty, no difficulty that is of such a character as to make faith appear impossible, or even unnatural. The consistent Theist must believe in the possibility of miracle, and the consistent Christian must believe in its actuality.² We do not believe in Jesus Christ simply because certain mighty works were done by those who told the story of His mission ; better say, *because we believe in Jesus, we believe in these signs and wonders done by Him or in His Name.* Being what He was, and where He was, Christians cannot but think it natural that He should perform miracles, that He should open blind eyes, and deaf ears, and give life and health to feeble suffering creatures. *How* these events could take place in nature, they do not say, but they do not suppose that their taking place constituted any violation of law, or any interruption of order. They suppose that if all were known that Christ knew, the explanation might be easy even to a little child. This is not taking refuge in an asylum of ignorance called the 'Will of God ;' it is acknowledging the limits of our knowledge, and trusting implicitly to *One who knows all things*, and of whose full and in-

¹ Professor Bruce defines 'miracle,' in the strict sense, as 'an event which could not have had a natural cause.'

² Says Professor Jevons, 'From the preceding reviews of the value of our scientific knowledge, I draw one distinct conclusion, that we cannot disprove the possibility of Divine interference in the course of nature.'—'Principles of Science,' vol. ii. p. 465.

timate knowledge we have ample proof. It seems to us that the Christian position here is one worthy of respect, and not at all to be ridiculed as unscientific. We live in a world where but a little knowledge is possible to us or any other subject, and where the only solutions of many perplexing problems are practical solutions. As we have seen, the wisest man of science cannot tell how mind and brain are associated,—cannot unite in thought things so unlike, yet all believe there is such a connection. No man can explain how an act of volition can bring about changes in the material world, and yet we are compelled to admit that such a thing is possible; we cannot unite in any speculatively consistent system the freedom of man and the absolute power of God, or, to use language less open to objection in certain quarters, the moral freedom of the individual with the known taints, tendencies, and effects of heredity; yet wise men accept both. They accept the facts of consciousness, and even a Huxley, with all his determinism, will admit that the will counts for something as a ‘condition of the course of events.’

Much the same is the relation of the simple believer in Jesus Christ to this vexed question of miracle. The signs and miracles and mighty works of Christ are no mere magical events, such as the conversion of ‘pens into pen-wipers;’ they are in harmony with His nature and with His mission, consistent with the character of Jesus, and fresh manifestations of the superhuman energy residing in His person. Such a view of the miraculous may seem to some unscientific and unworthy of acceptance, and yet in it they may find rest to their souls. Why should we begin our discussion of the credibility of the miraculous with the falling of the walls of Jericho, the speaking of Balaam’s ass, or the great fish that swallowed the disobedient prophet? Why should we allow the question to be prejudiced by theories about the size of the ark, or the action of the ‘sun standing still,’ upon all the planetary system? Far more rational is it for us to start with the story of the ‘Wonderful Life,’ itself the grandest miracle in history, and the only light that can truly illumine all other events that are either unusual or miraculous; starting here, and

especially with the Resurrection of Christ, admitted to be an historical fact by many who might scruple to accept every isolated Old Testament miracle, we shall find a firmer footing, and there will be less fear of having to abandon our positions. We must, however, refuse to accept, by whomsoever advanced, a theory of Christ's miracles that would mislead ourselves and others; we must not interpret His mighty works, the signs of His power, as if, like the town-crier's bell, they were a mere device to call attention to the proclamation He is about to make. These signs were an essential part of His message, acted words, if you will, but a real element in the Revelation He was making to the world. Men of Science go far towards admitting the validity of the evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. 'I regard,' says Dr. Carpenter, 'the historical evidence of the Resurrection as standing on a far wider basis than the historical evidence of any single miracle of the New Testament.' De Wette was no mere dabbler in questions like these, but a man familiar with all the facts, and keenly alive to all the critical objections, yet he thus speaks: 'The fact of the Resurrection, although a darkness which cannot be dissipated rests on the way and manner of it, cannot itself be called into doubt.'¹ But if we accept a fact, we must do so irrespective of our inability to explain the 'way and manner of it,' and we must ever distinguish between the *acceptance* and the *explanation* of facts of history. According to Mr. Hutton, the evidence for the Resurrection is such that no historian would think of rejecting it, were the fact itself *non-miraculous*; he also adds other considerations that help to corroborate and to strengthen the testimony.² These other considerations form part of the moral evidence, and they must, in a question like this, be allowed to have their due weight. Surely, even for a fact of this sort, we have no right to ask for more historical evidence than would be deemed sufficient in other cases, but we may welcome the corroborative testimony from other quarters. Canon Westcott, who has long studied this subject, and whose work on the 'Gospel of the Resurrection' should be carefully read by all who are

¹ See Cook's 'Monday Lectures.'

² 'Theological Essays,' vol. i.

perplexed in faith, declares that 'taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no single historic incident better or more variously supported than the Resurrection of Christ.' After a masterly discussion of the whole subject, Dr. Fairbairn avows 'that only the absolute certainty as to the reality of the Resurrection can explain the persistence of the belief. . . . The power of the belief is made manifest by the place it occupied, the system that crystallized around it. On this point institutions, customs, doctrines, hopes, and fears are alike unanimous and emphatic. Remove the Resurrection from primitive Christian theology and its speech, and they would cease to be coherent and intelligible. Approach the question from any side, and it only the more appears that without the risen Christ the Church is without a source or a cause. If historical evidence is sufficient anywhere, it is here ; for the written testimony of the Evangelists is our weakest testimony, almost perishes before the mightier testimony of those splendid facts that marked the birth of a new religion, the building of the city of God.'¹ If this be so, and the men whose testimony we have brought forward are all men familiar with modern Science, and in sympathy with all that is best in progress, if the actual rising again of Jesus Christ be one of the facts, the greatest fact in history, then no one need stumble at other miracles wrought by Him or in connection with His great mission. It is, therefore, of great advantage to start, not with what is *first in order of time*, but with what is *primary in order of importance*. Old Testament miracles differ, no doubt, in many respects from some of Christ's miracles ; so does the dispensation to which they belong and of which they form a constituent part. The law came by Moses, but the grace and the truth through Jesus Christ. This remark, or rather this interpretation of the old dispensation, must apply to the miracles as well as to the other elements of the old economy. Whether dealing with the old or the new, we must seek to get rid of that conception of miracle which makes it merely magical, or an expedient to gain attention ; the mighty works of the old, like the signs of the new

¹ See Fairbairn's 'Studies in the Life of Christ.'

dispensation, have a didactic value, and in both cases we shall find that the lessons are adapted to the learners.¹

Let it be once granted that Jesus Christ is what He professed to be, and to those who accept the Resurrection as fact this is the only explanation possible, then both His mighty works and the miracles of the Old Testament appear in a new light. They are parts of a grand whole, not isolated prodigies, things to be wondered at and spoken about, but 'constituent elements of a divine revelation.' If we believe that Jesus was the Son of God, that He appeared on earth in the form of man in order to lay the foundation of the kingdom of God, if we believe that He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, yet that He belonged to a higher world, and was part of a higher order of existence, that He had all authority in heaven and on earth under His control,—and this is the Christian faith,—surely the rest is natural enough. What could His natural be but our supernatural? What could His ordinary be but our extraordinary? His works were indeed 'signs' of the presence among men of new life and energy. He neither violated the laws of Nature, nor suspended their operation; He simply manifested His power over nature, and proclaimed by His works, as well as by His Word, that He was Lord of nature as well as King of men.

Why should this be incredible to men of science? They admit the sublime, we may say superhuman, energy residing in His spoken words; some of the stoutest opponents of miracles would be willing to unite with us in saying, 'Never man spake like this man!' They confess that Christ's words have given new light to humanity, and that He is immeasurably superior to all human teachers. Are words the only possible manifestation of the power residing in Jesus Christ? Is He alone, of all others, forbidden to embody thought in deed as well as speech? The miracles of Jesus are no more external to Him than are the words He uttered. 'Both are rooted in His personality, express His thought, reveal His Spirit, manifest the inner and essential

¹ See Newman Smyth's discussion of this educational aspect of the Old Testament Dispensation, in 'Old Faiths in New Light,' chap. iii.

qualities of His heart and mind. The sign to the sense is a symbol of the spirit, and miracles are but means by which the hidden and internal qualities of Christ become manifest and real to man.¹

The question of miracles, then, must be resolved into another and higher question, regarding the relation of this universe to an unseen universe of which even science must admit the existence, and regarding the relation of man to higher beings than himself. To those who believe that the seen and temporal, or, to use modern terms, matter and energy, are the whole that comes within man's cognizance, miracles must appear impossible; to those, on the other hand, who believe in a higher world, in the existence of a moral Ruler, who is also the Creator and Father of men; to those who accept as history the record of Christ's wonderful life, teachings, death, and resurrection; to those who believe that His words and acts are but manifestations of one and the same Personality,—miracles are no longer impossible; they are simply the acts of a great Being who manifested Himself for man's redemption. 'Apparent breaks of continuity' they may indeed be, but no real violations of that order which is but secondary, and which must ever be subordinate to that higher order to which Christ belonged, in which He lived, moved, and had His being. 'Without these miracles Jesus had been a living contradiction; full of grace as a copious gushing spring, yet a well without water. He must do miracles, not in order to prove formally that He is what He claims to be, but to be consistent with Himself, true to Himself, like Himself.'²

Without entering further into this subject, and especially without attempting to discuss each separate miracle, we plead for a fuller recognition of the essential connection between the thing done and the doer. The Bible miracles must be studied more in their relation to the system of which they are an essential part. Grant that Israel held no peculiar position among the nations of the earth; grant that Jesus Christ is simply a man amongst men, nobler than others indeed, but in every other sense *the same as others*; that the Christian religion is one among many of the manifestations of what is in man, to

¹ Dr. Fairbairn.

² Professor Bruce.

pass away, like Islam and other religions, after doing a certain amount of work in the world ; that, in fine, the Atheistic view of the world is the correct one,—then miracle must be rejected, and any record that contains miracle must be pronounced unworthy of credence. Grant, on the other hand, the truth of *Theism*, the trustworthiness of the records of Christ's life ; grant that Jesus Christ is what He claimed to be, that His kingdom is an 'everlasting kingdom,' containing within it elements that show its adaptation to man everywhere,—then miracle will appear in a new light. Science has not made it necessary for us to reject Christ and Christianity ;¹ more than this, the deeper study of all other religions only shows more clearly the unique character of Christ and the kingdom He established. Let apologists direct their attention to the true nature and proper function of miracles in connection with this universal religion, and the conflict will become a thing of the past. To one who believes in a universe self-existing and self-caused, miracle may well be impossible ; to one who accepts the Deistic conception of a God outside the world, taking no part in its affairs, prayer may be childish, and miracle a kind of anarchy. Such is not the Bible conception of nature ; such is not Christ's teaching about the unseen and eternal world. The Great Being who created this Kosmos is in no sense outside its operations. If there is one law, one life, and one harmonious working of all things, it is because He is behind all, within all, shaping, moulding, and directing all forces and energies according to His will, and in harmony with a purpose *of which Christ is the Interpreter and the Interpretation*. Here, amid the Babel of strife about miracle and law, about natural and supernatural, simple souls ever find rest and peace. As some one says, the best proof to us of the truth of *Theism* is that *Jesus lived and died in this faith* ; so the best proof to us that miracles are real, is that Jesus taught us to believe in them and Himself did many mighty works. Following Him in this, as in all other things, we no longer walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

¹ See a discussion of the relation of Science to miracle in 'Unseen Universe,' chap. vii. Professors Stewart and Tait clearly think science and miracle may both be accepted.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE—EVOLUTION.

‘Let him, the wiser man who springs
Hereafter, up from childhood shape
His action like the greater ape,
But I was born to other things.’

TENNYSON.

‘*Without God*, evolution, continuity of nature, natural selection, conservation of energy, or whatever other phrases happen to have currency for the hour, are mere sound and smoke, and imagination of science falsely so-called.’
—J. S. BLACKIE.

‘I have never been an Atheist, in the sense of denying the existence of a God.’—CHARLES DARWIN.

EVEN if the resurrection of Jesus Christ be accepted as a fact of history, and if the whole problem of miracle thus receive new illumination, we are by no means rid of all our difficulties. The Bible is not only a record of miracle, but also, it is alleged, a witness against what has now become the *creed of science*, the doctrine of Evolution. In the old book of Origins, man appears on the scene full-grown and perfect alike in body and mind, the product of his Creator’s skill and wisdom ; in the new book of Genesis, prepared by men of light and leading in science, he is said to have descended from some ape-like ancestor, and is but the last, if also the chiefest, of the mammals. And the same kind of explanation is given of the origin of all the creatures ; hence, for modern inquirers, men under the influence of the *Time-Spirit*, there is a stone of stumbling at the very threshold of Bible-story. The Book of Genesis asserts, or appears to assert, that God created by a simple exercise of Divine, and therefore Almighty, power, all things and all creatures, including man ; scientists assert most empha-

tically that all plants and animals, man as well as the rest, have come from one 'simple common form of life, and present these resemblances to each other because they are members of one great family, all descended from the same parent, and all more or less closely related to each other.' Our Bible starts with the assertion that in the beginning God created heavens and earth ; according to the bible of science, there was a ' period at which the solid masses of the earth, sun, planets, and stars did not exist, and when the matter composing them was widely diffused in a nebulous condition through space. . . . Then atom coalesced with atom, singly or in groups, and then the most primitive of our elements, such as hydrogen, were formed. . . . The smaller planets cooled down, and as the cooling process went on, the higher metals were formed. Organic matter appeared, and, by-and-by, in the course of long ages, some developed into living protoplasm. After this began the process of the evolution of the animals which we now see.'¹ This theory has to account for the genesis of man, as well as frogs and fishes, and so we are told that instead of the 'belief which we all learned in our childhood, that a single man was created out of lifeless mud, became a living soul, and was the progenitor of the whole human race, we must believe that men are descended, not from any of the species or genera of monkeys now living, but from creatures which were the common ancestors of man and monkeys, and much lower in the scale of existence than either.' Such, in brief words, is the theory of man's origin, the theory of the origin of all life, proposed by men of science in our time.

At first sight, there does appear to be hopeless contradiction, but first impressions generally stand in need of correction. There is a way of stating the contrast between old and new that suggests difficulty ; there may be another and a better way of dealing with this whole subject. We have given the words of an evolutionist who professes to accept both Bible and science, and who sees no essential antagonism between science and faith.² There are evolutionists who speak in very different

¹ 'The Bible and Science,' by Dr. Brunton. See also Huxley's 'American Addresses,' etc.

² We must, however, admit that Dr. Brunton's way of dealing with the Bible is hardly likely to commend itself to men of faith generally. He

tones ; they ridicule the very idea of creation by a 'man-like Artificer,' and point to the sublimity of the view above given. The 'Miltonic hypothesis,' to use the words of Professor Huxley, can, according to them, by no human ingenuity be reconciled with the plain facts of the case.

A great poet reminds us that one of the attributes of the creature man is that he 'looks before and after ;' it may be well to calm our minds for the proper discussion of this question by glancing at the history of the past. On the surface, indeed, the two accounts seem at hopeless variance, but things are not always as and what they seem. The African chief, who declared it inconceivable that horses and men could walk on water, and who ridiculed the statement of the American missionary that such things were done in his country during winter, no doubt appeared to himself and his comrades very accurate in his ideas. The Jewish rabbi who declared the new birth, taught by Jesus Christ, to be impossible, might seem, not only to himself, but to a modern thinker, scientific, and yet he was speaking in ignorance of great spiritual facts. So the theologians who reasoned that there could be no such place as the Antipodes, inasmuch as the Apostles were told to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, yet never went there, might seem strictly logical. When the new astronomical theories and conceptions were first discussed, it was confidently affirmed that they contradicted the letter of Scripture, and would ultimately destroy Christianity. Did not Joshua command sun and moon to stand still ? How, then, could any one receive the Bible as God's Word, and believe that the earth went round the sun ? No answer seemed possible to such questions, and yet Christianity did not die. The same difficulty arose in connection with the teachings of geology, and the theories of the bolder geologists. Many now living can remember the shock to faith caused by the discussions about the 'days' of the Book of Genesis. These disputes are nearly forgotten ; the 'harmonies' of that age are not now read, and religious men hardly does justice to the Bible-side of things, and he appears willing to abandon any and every claim at the bidding of scientific theory.

accept both geology and Genesis without serious injury to their faith. Even the introduction of chloroform in connection with surgery, a change that has done so much to make life's burdens more tolerable, was supposed to militate against faith in the authority of the Bible.¹ We smile at these perplexities of our fathers,—we give them little credit for wisdom in their opposition to science, and yet we act towards scientific men much as they did. We may be reminded that none of the doctrines taught in former days by men of science were so antagonistic to faith as are the theories of modern times ; so they thought, and so they spake, when asked to have more faith in truth, and to take warning from the history of the men that lived before them. Nothing so shakes faith in the authority of the Bible as these unreasoning panics to which, periodically, religious men seem subject. The extremes to which even Christians go on one side and the other seem to us to indicate lack of deep religious faith. We live too much on the traditions of others, and too little on real living personal faith ; and hence every wind of doctrine seems to affect us. As illustrative of what is meant, we may take the extremes of opinion about the character and work of the late Charles Darwin. Perhaps no man has done more to change the thought of his time about the *method of creation*. No name has been more before the Christian public, and no man has been more unjustly attacked, perhaps, by the religious press. His opinions have been caricatured, and often presented in the most ridiculous light, by those who professed to be defenders of the faith. Darwin's teachings as to the origin of species and the descent of man, have been parodied rather than expounded, and all kinds of names and epithets have been applied to him. He has often been held up as an Atheist, a Materialist, and a blasphemer. This is bad enough and sad enough, but the next swing of the pendulum is worse. Darwin dies, and, wonderful irony of fate, the destroyer of the faith is buried in Westminster Abbey,

¹ Sir J. Y. Simpson met divines on their own ground and vanquished them. He demonstrated that the Creator, *by causing a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, had sanctioned the use of anaesthetics.*

amid universal lamentation! The opinions expressed about his life-work have been almost as extreme as ever, only on the other side. Christian preachers have extolled him as a kind of saint in disguise, and Christian versifiers have moralised about the change that must have come over his views of life as he entered the unseen world, and found out that he had been serving God all the while, though ignorantly and only in the outer court of His vast temple. Is it too much to say that these strange alternations of blessing and cursing, and of cursing and blessing, are, in reality, more perplexing to the faith of the weak, than the patient study and candidly expressed opinions of the eminent naturalist? First, we unite to ban the man and his work, then to ridicule and misinterpret its true meaning; finally, when he dies, we carry his body in triumph to the great Christian temple, the home of the mighty dead, and we bury him in hope of the resurrection, as one who, though ignorantly, has been worshipping God all the time. Such fluctuations of opinion and feeling can arise only from feeble conviction, and from a religious emotion that has no basis in deep spiritual relations to truth.

Is this doctrine of evolution, now almost universally accepted under one or other of its many forms by men of science, after all opposed to faith in the living God? Is it even opposed to the meaning of the Bible Record when properly understood?¹ Various and conflicting answers have been given to such questions. First of all, we must learn to distinguish between the doctrine of evolution as taught, say by Darwin, and the doctrine of evolution as advocated by thorough-going Materialists.

¹ Exception may be taken to the statement that evolution is universally accepted; we say *almost*, in order to provide for the exceptions, which are few and far between, among the leaders of thought in science. In his criticism on Spencer's 'Philosophy,' Dr. Fairbairn frankly accepts evolution as the 'creational method.' 'There is to be no attempt here to question or deny the doctrine of evolution; it is, indeed, frankly accepted' (*Contemporary Review*, August, 1881). Professor Huxley speaks of the opposition to evolution as not worthy of 'serious consideration.' This is too strong; nevertheless, it is very widely accepted. See on the other side, 'The Gospel of Evolution,' by Dr. Elam, *Contemporary Review*, May, 1880.

Darwin himself wrote from the standpoint of Theism. Whatever we may say or think about the effect of the naturalist's life-work on Theism and the Theistic view of things, we are bound to do justice to the Theistic position assumed by the author of the 'Origin of Species.' Mr. Sully remarks, that Darwin's 'theory as a whole is a heavy blow to the teleological method.'¹ The late Mr. Mill admitted that the design-argument had suffered considerably from the work of the evolutionists, but also confessed that 'the theory, if admitted, would be in no way inconsistent with creation.'² This was the opinion of the late Charles Kingsley, and with it the distinguished author of the 'Origin of Species' himself agrees. 'I see no good reason,' he writes, 'why the views given in this volume should shock the religious feelings of anyone. It is satisfactory, as showing how transient such impressions are, to remember that the greatest discovery ever made by man, namely, the law of the attraction of gravity, was also attacked by Leibnitz as subversive of natural, and inferentially of revealed religion.' Again he writes: 'Authors of the highest eminence seem to be fully satisfied with the view that each species has been independently created. To my mind it accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator. . . . There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, *having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one*; and that whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.'³

Whatever we may think of these opinions, whether we agree with Darwin or not, we must give him credit alike for his candour of mind, and for his Theistic view of the universe. He leaves, indeed, untouched, so far as direct efforts are concerned, the great problems connected with the relation of evolution to Theism. He starts with a Creator, and with matter; he sup-

¹ Encyclopædia Britannica : article 'Evolution.'

² See Mill's essay on 'Theism.'

³ See 'Origin of Species,' chap. xv.

poses certain laws impressed upon matter by the Creator, even supposes *life breathed into one or more forms* (here using the very language and figure of the Book of Genesis, and thus acknowledging its fitness); given all these, he attempts, with what success the future must tell, to show how all things and all persons come to be where and what they are. Such a view of evolution cannot fairly be said to contradict the teachings of the Book of Genesis any more, at least, than the established truths of astronomy contradict the teachings of Bible-writers. *The forms of expression* in the Book of Genesis may lend themselves more readily to one view of things than the other, but forms of expression are adapted to the intellectual state of those to whom they are addressed, or are the outcome of the intellectual ideas of the time; meanings may grow with the development of intelligence, and may be found larger than their outward expression might at first indicate. As we have before remarked, we must not allow those who occupy the *Deistic standpoint* to interpret Bible-writers to us. The God of the Bible is no mechanical God, and His methods of working are in no sense *man-like*. Even Darwin himself can find no better way of expressing a possible relation of the Creator to the first form, or forms, of matter than that adopted by the author of the Book of Genesis. He talks of the Creator *breathing life* into the protoplasmic-materials, out of which have sprung all that we see and know. As Kingsley puts it, 'they find that now they have got rid of an interfering God—a master-magician, as I call it—they have to choose between the absolute empire of accident, and a living, immanent, ever-working God.' This living, immanent, ever-working God is more the Hebrew idea than that suggested by many Bible critics. 'The Hebrew was the purest monotheist of antiquity, the most strenuous believer in creation by God; but how did he conceive Him as acting? Not by a "process of manufacture," or like a "workman shaping a piece of furniture," but as immanent, yet intelligent energy, Creator, Maker, if you like, but not mechanic. He created by speech, the symbol of thought; by a command, the symbol of will. The world was the expression of the divine thought, the creation of

the Divine will; and so came to be, not by an artificial constructive, but by a natural productive, process.¹ A surface-reading of the Bible may lead us to say that creation and evolution are contradictory ideas; a deeper study may suggest to us that nowhere is the *method or process* made known, and the very forms of speech, which seem so necessarily connected with creation, may also be found to fit evolution moulds. This is admitted by eminent Biblical scholars as well as by eager apologists. Professor Huxley sneers at the elasticity of the Hebrew language, out of which meanings apparently so opposite may be drawn; sneering has been much used in the Darwinian controversy, as the professor well knows, and its effects have not been so powerful as the sneerers intended. The exposition, for example, given by Professor Tayler Lewis, of the creative days of Genesis, is in harmony with *one view of evolution*.

'The full formation of man in the sixth day,' says Lewis, 'does not oppose the idea that the powers and evolutions of matter that were finally sublimated into the perishable germ of the human body, and the types from lower forms that finally went into the human physical constitution, were being prepared during all the days. This was *his being formed out of the earth*, that is, out of nature in its evolving series.' Lewis refers to the striking words of Psalm cxxxix. 15, language which would delight the heart of an evolutionist, if only it were found outside the Bible. 'The reasons are strong,' says the same writer, 'for interpreting "man from the earth," as we interpret the fish and the reptile from the waters. If the *formative* word is used in the one case, so is the word, which some regard as the more directly *creative*, employed in the other. And "God *created* the great whales and the moving things which the waters swarmed," that is, all the marine animals, from the greatest to the least. *The one language is no more inconsistent with the idea of a process than the other.* There is nothing then to shock us as anti-Scriptural in the thought that man, too, as to his physical and material, is a product of Nature. But he is also a metaphysical, a supernatural, a spiritual being. To describe him in

¹ Fairbairn, 'Studies in the Philosophy,' etc., p. 77.

this respect there issued the higher word "the image," the image of God, in distinction from his male and female conformations, which belong wholly to the physical. The image of God the distinguishing type of man! Hold fast to this in all its spirituality as the mirror of the eternal ideas, and we need not fear naturalism. Many in the Church are shivering with alarm at the theories, which are constantly coming from the scientific world about the origin of species, and the production of man, or rather the physical that may have become man, through the lower types. The quieting remedy is a higher psychology, such as the fair interpretation of the Bible warrants, when it tells us that the *first man* became such through the inspiration (the in-breathing) and the image of God lifting him out of nature, and making him and all his descendants a peculiar species, by the possession of the image of the supernatural.¹ Professor Lewis may be said to belong to a past age, and to represent a state of things no longer possible. He represents a school of thought, at all events, *in which the Bible is revered as of divine authority*, and in which the advances of science are welcomed. His words are in harmony with what Darwin, Kingsley, and others have said about the doctrine of evolution. He sees nothing contrary *even to the literal reading of Genesis* in the belief that man's physical nature has been evolved out of lower forms; he also contends that this lower evolution, by itself, cannot account for all that is in man. Man is in nature, and through nature; he is also *above nature*, and, on the spiritual side, linked with the unseen and eternal. This is simple matter-of-fact, and is admitted, though in different ways, by evolutionists themselves.

Taking then one view of evolution, one doctrine taught by great thinkers about the origin of life, we may even say the view of Darwin himself, it cannot be said that it either contradicts the Book of Genesis, or that it is opposed to the ideas and feelings of believers in Divine Revelation. True, it is contrary to traditional readings of the Bible; so are the doctrines of astronomy and geology now accepted; so the simple expressions used by

¹ Introduction to 'Genesis,' by Lewis. See Lange's 'Commentary on the Old Testament.'

Bible writers about the seat of feelings and passions, and the like, are opposed to scientific terminology. We must, however, bear in mind that the Bible writers were not professors of physical science, that they spoke in popular language suggested by the phenomena they described, and in words understood by the people. So long as professors of astronomy unite with peasants to speak of the rising and setting of the sun, so long as physiologists and psychologists speak of *lunacy* like other people, so long, indeed, as they use the traditional language rather than words intelligible only to the few, so long they must allow the Bible writers similar liberty without finding fault.

In thus admitting, even maintaining, that *a doctrine of evolution* may be in harmony with Bible teaching, we by no means wish to be understood as affirming the truth of either Darwin's view, or any other. We plead for liberty, alike of inquiry and utterance. Evolution is a working-hypothesis or plan, and as such must be allowed to live and, if possible, to justify its existence; we do not admit, even for argument's sake, the evolution propounded by some physicists. Darwin starts with a Creator, and thus gets rid of the Atheistic difficulty; to him, as to many others, it seems impossible to conceive that the universe with all its order, beauty, harmony of parts, and adaptation of means to ends, can have originated by accident. 'The birth of the species and the individual are equally parts of that grand sequence of events, which our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance. The understanding revolts at such a conclusion, whether or not we are able to believe that every slight variation of structure, etc., have all been ordained for some special purpose.'¹ So long as we attribute the origin of all things to the Creator, and revolt at the idea of the universe being an 'accidental cavity, in which an accidental dust has been accidentally swept into heaps for the accidental evolution of the majestic spectacle of organic and inorganic life;' so long as we regard this 'majestic spectacle as one as plainly for the eye as any diagram of the mathematician,'² there is not much

¹ 'The Descent of Man,' p. 613.

² 'As Regards Protoplasm,' by Dr. H. Stirling.

danger either to faith or morals in the provisional acceptance of the Evolution theory. That the leading Christian thinkers of all schools so regard this matter may be made plain by a few brief citations and references. Mr. Row, in his Bampton Lecture, thus speaks: 'It is no necessary consequence of a theory of evolution, that it should exclude the conception of an intelligent Creator. . . . Our duty is to hold ourselves in a state of expectancy, free from all *à priori* theorizing, and ready to accept the truth, from whatever quarter it may come.' Dr. Conder, while denying that evolution had been made good, admits that one form of the theory is quite consistent with Theism; he regards it as simply the *process* of creation.¹ Janet, in his work on 'Final Causes,' thus speaks: 'The hypothesis of evolution may lead in effect to a conception of *finality*, which differs from that commonly formed by being grander.' St. George Mivart, not only an able naturalist, but also a loyal member of the Catholic Church, affirms that 'Christian thinkers are perfectly free to accept the general evolution theory.' Dr. Rigg, whom no one will accuse of desiring either to abandon or betray the Evangelical faith, reminds us that behind natural selection we have still what old-fashioned believers call Providence, and so long as this is recognised he sees nothing Atheistic in one form of the theory.² Dr. Flint, in his work on 'Theism,' says: 'I have challenged the theology of Mr. Darwin, and those who follow his guidance in theology. I have no wish to dispute his science; I pass no judgment on his theories, in so far as they are scientific theories. In so far as they are true, they must be merely expressions of the way in which Divine intelligence has operated in the universe. Instead of excluding, they must imply belief in an all-originating, all-foreseeing, all-foreordaining, all-regulative Intelligence, to determine the rise and the course and the goal of life, as of all finite things.'

Looking, then, at certain aspects of the Evolution theory, we see no reason why believers in the Divine authority of the Bible

¹ See 'Basis of Faith;' also the 'Evolutionary Hypothesis' in Bishop Ellicott's, 'Six Addresses on the Being of God.'

² Rigg's 'Discourses and Addresses on Religion and Philosophy.'

should feel alarmed at its progress. It is simply an attempt to describe the *process* or the becoming of all things, but behind the process there must be intelligence controlling all and guiding all to one great end. Some, indeed, look upon it as giving a grander view of creation instead of being in contradiction to the Bible record. They regard that record as independent or all explanations as to the *how* of all things, and in no way fettering those who accept its teachings ; so regarding it, they plead for liberty either to accept or reject evolution, according as evidence leads in this way or that.

We must not attempt to conceal from ourselves that only one view of evolution can be so regarded ; there is another theory of evolution which ignores a Creator, which substitutes *process* for cause, and which, if it does not in so many words deny a presiding Intelligence, leaves no room for its exercise in connection with the origin and progress of life. This is the Materialistic side of evolution, the acceptance of which is not only inconsistent with faith in Bible teachings, but with Theism under any form. Some have from the first contended that Darwin's view logically leads to Atheism ; and certainly, if we accept as fact all the theories of the great naturalist, it might be difficult to resist this conclusion. Fortunately, it is possible to say that evolution, in this Materialistic sense, is not the teaching of science. It may be accepted by distinguished scientists ; it is not, and we venture to say never can be, the sober teaching of true science. In spite of the high-sounding phrases and boastful words of many, *science has to admit that it knows nothing at all of the origin of life, whether human or otherwise.* When we say that evolution has become the creed of science, and that apologists and divines no longer dispute its claims, we do not mean evolution in the Atheistic sense. True, there are men of science who see in nature only matter and force and their results ; but, as we have already seen, *science* does not justify a position like this ; it is occupied in defiance alike of scientific method and accurate knowledge. Other evolutionists again admit what older thinkers called Divine interference, only they place it as far back as possible,

so as not to hinder the working of their plan of life. Grant interference at any point, and Materialism is no longer affirmed. 'It may, perhaps,' say Professors Stewart and Tait, 'eventually be possible, by means of an hypothesis of evolution, to account for the great variety of living forms on the supposition of a single primordial germ to begin with, but the difficulty still remains how to account for the germ';¹ this difficulty, as we have pointed out, Darwin simply passes over by the Theistic assumptions with which he starts. Mr. A. R. Wallace, who shares with Darwin the honour of having set the world right about the origin of species, 'sees in the production of man the intervention of an eternal Will,' and Dr. Maudsley, whose doctrine of the origin of the moral sense is certainly Materialistic enough, tells us that the more we reflect on the origin of all things, the more we are 'forced in the end to the recognition of a Power from which all life and all energy proceed, which has been from the beginning, is now, and so far as we can see ever shall be, and which cannot be comprehended and controlled by human thought and will. . . . We come back indeed to something which, however we forbear to name it, is very like the theological Trinity—God the Unrevealed and Unrevealable, God the Revealed, and God the Revealer!'² To the same effect, if followed to their logical issue, are many of Mr. Spencer's sayings about the unknown Power behind the phenomena we see and know. Thus, even the most thorough-going evolutionists find Atheism impossible, and are compelled to fall back upon ideas so like those found in the Bible, that they themselves are surprised at the analogy. Of course, we must not venture either to give Christian expression to these half-expressed thoughts of theirs, nor must we suggest that the Bible has helped them so to embody their conceptions of this mystery; the very thought of such an origin of their ideas exercises a disturbing influence upon their minds. But the unsophisticated reason of men will not long tolerate this view of life; if evolutionists have either to clothe themselves in mystery and utter oracular ambiguities, or else to speak of a Power *whose attributes are per-*

¹ 'The Unseen Universe.'

² 'Physiology of Mind.'

sonal, if they have to preserve their theories at the expense of consistency, we shall be able to judge as to the ultimate value of their philosophy of life and their contributions to the sum of human knowledge. The evolutionists may vehemently deny that the Power they postulate is in any sense *will*, or that their Creator has any affinity with the Power acknowledged by Bible writers; the facts are not altered by such denials. The highest attributes of which we have any knowledge are mental and moral, *and if we are to deny to a power attributes seen in its products and operations*, there must be an end to all correct thinking. The Bible, so despised by many, may here come to our aid and help us to remember that the power creating, or evolving, the eye and ear *must itself see and hear*. Nor is this inconsistent with Spencer's view that the power manifested is as much above any mere personality known by us as personality is above the fetish; the Christian Trinity is not by any means a simple, it is rather a highly complex, idea of personality, but until we fully understand the highest, we must be allowed to speak in terms and use analogies that are understood by us. And this brings us back to where we started. An evolution which ignores or denies an Evolver,—a mind presiding over the process,—is contrary to the teaching of science, as well as to the teachings of the Bible and the instincts of faith. Grant, if you will, that evolution and not creation is the proper way of reading the past history of the earth and the origin of man; 'special creations,' says Dr. Fairbairn, 'are not necessarily the ways of God, though it may suit Mr. Spencer to represent these as the only possible modes of His working. . . . Spirit is essentially energy, and the God who is a spirit can never be inactive, must be everywhere and at every moment a living Force, a producing and efficient Will. Continuous and universal action is given in the very idea of God; it is impossible to conceive Him without conceiving it. Then, as to His relation to nature, it is and must be natural. . . . In evolution then, the creative action does not exclude God; its process is one that only the more demands the exercise of His energy and the direction of His will.'¹

¹ 'Mr. Herbert Spencer's Philosophy,' *Contemporary Review*, August, 1881.

To sum up what we have to say. There is a doctrine of evolution which may be held by believers in the Bible record, and which is accepted, *provisionally*, by many loyal and eminent Christian thinkers ; there is another doctrine which is opposed both to Scripture and science, which denies all creative power, which resolves the whole into an *eternal process* with neither real cause nor rational end. If, therefore, we are told that it is impossible for an evolutionist to be loyal to Bible teaching, we must ask those who so speak to distinguish between things that differ. We must not refuse, in accepting Bible forms of speech, to find room for ideas whose meanings go beyond these forms, and whose fuller sense may indeed be better expressed by thoughts that appear at first sight rather foreign to the Bible. The poet, seeking to glorify the Bible, reminds us that 'it gives a light to every age,' and that while it gives to all, it 'borrows' from none. This is not all the truth. Not only is light needed, but also reflectors for the light, and while no age can give light to the Bible, the thoughts of one age may *better reflect its light* than those of another.

The Bible affirms the existence of a Creator, and, according to some, it even declares that evolution is His method of working ; it is quite conceivable that ages before the mode was understood or even surmised, the fact itself should have been quite evident. The Bible affirms a 'beginning,' and even science declares that this is the testimony of creation itself. A distinguished philosopher of our time, so far from considering matter eternal, speaks of the atoms as 'manufactured articles.' These, and others might be given, are positive indications that there may be more real harmony between the Bible and science than at first sight appears. It is perfectly true that many evolutionists are opposed to the Bible, and that they reject Christian Theism ; it is also true that Darwin and his co-workers have supplied more proofs of 'design' than before were known, and while they have often ignored, often rejected, the doctrine of *ends*, they have furnished many new and striking illustrations of purposive acts and of adaptations in nature. This being so, we may well afford to await, with hope too, the results of fuller

knowledge. When botanists like Carruthers and Asa Gray assure us that the *design argument* will gain rather than lose from the investigations of the last quarter of a century, we may find in 'quietness and confidence' our truest strength.

But the first chapters of the Book of Genesis, what are we to make of them? If either evolution *or* creation, where are we to stop? Shall we not admire, with Huxley, the elasticity of language capable of such different interpretations?¹

We are not prepared to give any dogmatic utterance on this vexed question, but a few remarks may not be deemed out of place. First of all, it is admitted by men of science who have examined with any degree of care the Book of Genesis, or, speaking more generally, the Bible, *that where we have statements about matters of fact, or about the order of events in creation, there is an accuracy that is most remarkable.* The order of creation, or of evolution, given in the Book of Genesis, is the very order seen in the records of the most recent science. Call this an accident if you will, it is a sufficiently noticeable thing, and deserves attention. As Dr. Dawson, a high authority, says, this 'accuracy is remarkable, unexampled, I believe, in any other literature; so much is this the case, that if you will take a page of any of our modern poets, and one from the Bible, you will find errors in the one and not in the other.'² To say the least, this introduces an element into the problem that must be accounted for, and that is not accounted for on the 'Freethinking' theory. Just as Moses, or whoever may be supposed to have first written the story preserved to us in Genesis, is familiar with the facts in their order, so is Peter, the fisherman, wonderfully well acquainted with aspects of truth supposed to be known only to our generation. We glory in the ideas associated with the conservation, transformation, and dissipation of energy, and consider them new and peculiar to our time, yet Peter's account of the future of this planet is, so to say, based on these principles and laws.³ Of course, this may all be accidental; but such

¹ See the early pages of his 'American Addresses.'

² See on this subject Principal Dawson's lectures on the 'Bible and Science;' also his larger work on the 'Origin of the World.'

³ See closing chapter of the 'Unseen Universe.'

accidents, especially when surrounded by other and similar ones, create a presumption in favour of the accuracy of the record.

Whatever may be said about the Bible as a whole, its accounts of the origin of things cannot be said to be wanting in interest or suggestiveness. A comparison of the Book of Genesis with other accounts of the origin of all life, might lead men of science to think and speak more generously about a story so simple and so straightforward. That there are portions of this story that cannot be taken literally, that it has suffered much from the over-literal readings of some of its friends, are positions familiar enough. Nobody ever saw, nobody ever expects to see, knowledge growing on trees, whether in or out of Paradise. Hence it may be doubted whether those read wisely who read those early chapters as they would a work on natural history, or the annals of some ancient family. Those who call it poetry or mythology may be wrong on the other side, but no one can study Dr. Dawson's work on the 'Origin of the World,' for example, or the masterly 'introduction' of Professor Lewis to the Book of Genesis, without feeling convinced that there are in these chapters grand thoughts very grandly expressed, and that they are full of suggestive thought and spiritual truth. Or, take, from a slightly different standpoint, Professor Blackie's 'Lay Sermon' on the 'Creation of the World,' and it may be discovered after all that the Book of Genesis reveals truth never taught by the more prosaic methods of history. According to the learned Professor, himself a poet and an original thinker, the first chapter of Genesis seems a 'perfect model of sublime and simple wisdom,' and it has too often been 'confounded with Playfair and Hutton, and the minute shell-fish of Murchison's Silurian rocks, not as it ought to have been with Homer, and Hesiod, and Thales, and Heraclitus, or the portentous cosmogonies of the Indian Puranas.'¹ This sublime chapter gives, he thinks, the true philosophy of creation, tells us not about 'making out of nothing,' but of order and how it is produced, of design and its true nature, of progression and the 'principle

¹ See Blackie's 'Lay Sermons.' See also 'Genesis the Third: History not Fable,' by Rev. Edward White.

of development by progression,' up to its highest summit, man. Whether we are able to follow Blackie in everything or not, no Theist can refuse to admit that he has made out a good case for the 'sublimity' of the Book, nor need the interpreter refuse to see, in the comparisons and analogies he suggests, hints towards a more correct theory of the Old Testament story of Creation. And starting here, with the grand truths affirmed at the very outset of the record, we shall, at least, be kept from falling into the Free-thinker's fallacy of assuming that order, reason, and adaptation, of which the universe is so full, have no significance for man's spiritual nature. He who accepts the Book of Genesis will neither be Pantheist, Atheist, nor Deist; he will behold in nature, and through nature, an ordering Mind, and in all parts of the Kosmos traces of the presence of reason. *And these are the very thoughts suggested by the facts to which evolutionists make their appeal.* They are for ever reminding us of 'natural selection,' of the 'survival of the fittest,' or the 'struggle for existence,' a struggle in which there are seen wonderful adaptation of means to ends. These are mere phrases, high-sounding indeed, but absolutely meaningless, unless we see behind the process a cause, behind the strife and struggle, with its resulting fitnesses, a presiding genius, a power marshalling its forces, guiding their action, and securing by its wisdom and power the fittest ends.

Other and perhaps deeper questions arise in connection with the relation of science to the Bible; questions about the real meaning and proper use of the record; questions also about the manner in which these sublime ideas were communicated to man, and the relation they hold to later and higher parts of the Divine Revelation. Into these we do not enter; it is enough to show that evolution is no solvent for getting rid of revelation; enough to show that some of the most ardent evolutionists are men who cordially accept the Bible. It may be, indeed, that this very idea of evolution, which is itself a Biblical conception, may help us to understand and interpret the Bible better. Smyth, in his 'Old Faiths in New Light,' gives various illustrations of this suggestion. He shows that

the Bible itself is an historical growth, and that it is adapted to the spiritual education of mankind; he shows that the ideas contained in and expressed by the Book of Genesis have themselves been the grandest factors in the spiritual culture of the race, that, in fact, evolution is the method alike of the old and new creation. Thus, it may be found that this 'development theory' throws as much light upon religion as it has shed on the realms of nature, and that the men of faith, who have often shunned and feared it, may yet find it one of their most helpful allies. We may not be able at present to demonstrate the harmony,—the two ideas may even appear to wage deadly war; but in the days that are coming Smyth's words may be seen to be true, and with them we conclude: 'We may feel, some of us personally, toward the first chapter of Genesis in particular, very much as one might feel toward an old friend, whom for a time he had come to suspect and to wish out of sight, and from whom he grew all the more estranged by the indiscreet claims of others on his behalf; but whom at length he has learned to know better, and to take at his real worth, and has found after repeated trial to be a friend indeed. Cleared of false interpretations, relieved of the suspicions cast upon its truthfulness by imprudent defenders, known in its genuine worth, and prized for its really exceptional virtues and grand character, the Mosaic Genesis is found to have been all the while the firm, steadfast friend, both of science and religion.'¹

NOTE.—We have assumed, in what has been said about the Darwinian-evolution, that the author of the 'Origin of Species' wrote from a Theistic standpoint. This is hotly disputed by some; according to them, there is no evidence in the works of the naturalist that he believed in a *Creator*. It has always appeared to us impossible for anyone intelligently reading the 'Origin of Species' and the 'Descent of Man' to arrive at such a conclusion. Whatever views Darwin might have held, whatever *private opinions*, so to speak, he entertained, he must be regarded as upholding Theism, if judged simply by his writings. The following note, written in May, 1879, may be of interest. It is marked *private*, and has, therefore, never been used; now that its illustrious writer is no longer with us, we may allow it to appear. Its history is as follows: A lecturer on Christian Evidences, in

¹ 'Old Faiths in New Light,' p. 83.

a public lecture delivered in Great Grimsby, called Mr. Darwin an Atheist. The present writer felt that both justice and religion demanded truth-speaking, and wrote to the *Grimsby News*, demonstrating from his published works that Darwin was a Theist, that he started with God and matter, and did not attempt to solve the problem of the origin of all things. This letter was sent to Mr. Darwin, and the hope expressed that no injustice had been done to his position. The following reply was received :

Down, Beckenham, Kent.

‘DEAR SIR,

‘It seems to me absurd to doubt that a man may be an ardent theist and an evolutionist. You are right about Kingsley. Asa Gray, the eminent botanist, is another case in point. What my own views may be is a question of no consequence to anyone except myself. But, as you ask, I may state that my judgment often fluctuates. Moreover, whether a man deserves to be called a Theist depends on the definition of the term, which is much too large a subject for a note. In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an Atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older), but not always, that an Agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind.

‘Dear sir, yours faithfully,

‘CH. DARWIN.’

CHAPTER X.

SCEPTICISM AND THE BIBLE.

‘The Bible begins nobly, with Paradise, the symbol of youth ; and concludes with the Eternal Kingdom, the Holy City.’—NOVALIS.

‘The hard places in the Old Testament are revealed by the increasing light of the Bible itself.’

‘The light of revelation seems adapted to the eye of the human understanding in a manner so remarkable as to indicate a higher wisdom as the author of both.’—NEWMAN SMYTH.

‘This, therefore, is the place and value of revelation : it makes the light imparted by inspiration to Prophets and Apostles ours, as truly as it would be if the inspiration had been granted to ourselves.’—DR. J. McLEOD CAMPBELL.

BEHIND all Sceptical arguments about miracles, evolution-theories, answers to prayer and the like, there is an attitude of mind (perhaps we ought to say *heart*), which is far more difficult to deal with, as well as far more hostile to faith in Divine Revelation. When Scepticism expresses its opinions and carefully formulates its objections to revealed religion, we may hope by patient reasoning to remove some of the hindrances out of its way ; we may show that there is no good reason for dividing the universe into two realms, the one natural, the other supernatural ; a more truly scientific conception will be at the same time more spiritual, and more in harmony, as we have seen, with the Bible view of life. ‘The first requisite to a better understanding of the religion of the Bible is that we should learn to enter with simplicity into its point of view, and to this end we must remember above all that the Bible knows nothing of that narrow definition of miracle which we have inherited from mediæval metaphysics.’¹ In the same way, objections arising

¹ Dr. W. Robertson Smith.

out of sympathy with the evolution hypothesis are by no means deadly. Honest and impartial minds may come to see that the precise mode of the *becoming* of all things must be discovered, if discovered at all, by a patient study of the universe itself, and that it is no part of the function of Revelation to make this known to man.¹ In short, more patient inquiry, bolder faith, greater discrimination, and, above all, a truer conception of the nature and end of all Bible-teaching, may enable us to rise above these current and, to many, most disturbing objections.

The 'Sceptical bias' against the Bible, and against the Bible view of things, is a much more serious obstacle in the way of faith. It cannot be reasoned away, for its basis is non-rational; it consists not so much in any objection to this or that doctrine, as in a *mental and moral attitude towards the very idea of a Divine Revelation*. The position of an ordinary Bible reader is so different from that of a Sceptic, that the one can hardly understand the view of the other. Among those who have been accustomed from their childhood to reverence the Bible as God's Word to man, there may indeed be much practical neglect, much moral opposition to the law of life there revealed; along with this there is usually a theoretic assent to the teachings of the Book. To this Book, or collection of books, a peculiar place alike in intellect and heart is ever accorded. Amid much unfaithfulness to its spirit, there is a kind of reverence for the letter of the Word, a secret consciousness, too, that the Book is right, and the violator of its laws wrong. Its precepts are held secure, are a kind of conscience, yea, are considered to be superior to the dictates of the conscience itself. True, along with this reverence there may, at times, be found other feelings; some of the Old Testament records may cause mental uneasiness, yet it is believed that if all were known that could be known, even these would be seen to be in harmony with the purpose of the Book and the mind of its Author. Added to this intellectual relation, there is also an emotional relation to the Book which is of great value, and which exerts no small

¹ 'A revelation of anything we could find out for ourselves would be an absurdity.'—*Tait*. See also 'Paradoxical Philosophy,' p. 154.

amount of influence on the life. This record is associated with all that is tenderest and purest in the affections. Its voice has been heard in earliest years, as the family began and ended the day, *as the very voice of God*. In hours of suffering and sorrow, its consolations were sought by devout parents and friends; its words of hope have cheered and comforted the heart in its darkest periods. The Bible reader, even when most unfaithful to its lesson, can remember how some godly father uttered its honoured words, how some sainted mother's tears often wet its pages, as she turned to the inspired volume for guidance in her deepest needs. All these and a thousand other associations, some of them intellectual, some moral, and some emotional, cluster round this volume, and help to make it a real power in the life of many; hence there are thousands of men and women who, while they may disobey its commands, and in spite of its warnings follow their selfish ways, yet regard it as God's voice to the soul, and God's light shining on the path of life.

The Sceptical attitude is the very reverse of this; there is a *bias against the Bible* which neutralizes all these good tendencies, and which makes it impossible for its most solemn teachings to get into living contact with the heart and life. The very fact that any sentiment is from the Bible seems sufficient to stir, in some breasts, a feeling of opposition. No matter how true, no matter how much in harmony with the experience of the race, let any lesson come from this book, and at once it is rejected with disdain, or treated with contempt. Speak of the sages of China and India, of the wisest men of Greece and Rome, and there is at once a response; a word from Confucius, from Buddha, or Plato, or Marcus Aurelius, will be treasured up as of highest value, as almost binding on the conscience of man. A word from the sweet singer of Israel, no matter how true, no matter how tender, is scoffed at; all David's sins are exposed, all his shortcomings, and they are many, dragged into the light, as a reason for rejecting his teachings. Where this bias is strong, nothing like justice can be expected; no allowance may be made for time, place, and circumstance. If we complain of the defective morality in some of Plato's ideals,

we are at once reminded of the conditions under which he lived and wrote, the intellectual and spiritual 'environment' of his time, of the impossibility of applying to him canons of criticism applicable to the philosophers of our age. No such allowance can be made for the prophets of Israel, or for the heroes of the old dispensation. If we are to have a *revelation* at all, it must have in it nothing defective, nothing of historical development; all must come Minerva-like full-grown from the mind of the earliest prophets and teachers. Hence the effect of this sceptical bias and attitude on those over whom it obtains dominion; hence also the difficulty of meeting it by either argument or appeal.

That there should be such an attitude towards any book in these days of science and criticism, may be doubted by some. We are accustomed to extol the *fair-play* given to all kinds of doctrines and opinions in this age, and to say that no matter who speaks, or what is spoken, the world will give a fair and impartial hearing.¹ No greater delusion could seize the popular imagination. *Truth, as such, is still the pursuit of the few*, and *fashion* and authority,—the authority of their own set and circle,—still the god of the many. Take, by way of illustration, political life, how little real desire is there to find the truth and to follow the right! Rival parties set up rival leaders, and worship them in the most unreasoning way; each of these parties has its press and its following, and the main function of both is to applaud. Grave and learned speakers, on popular platforms, are not ashamed to make the most reckless charges, and to suggest the vilest motives for acts of which they may disapprove; words are torn from their context, all honest meaning taken from them, and then they are used to represent opinions never held, certainly never uttered, by some leading statesman. Only those who carefully study the public speeches of our public men can be aware of the extent to which this art

¹ 'In a matter so solemn as that of religion, all men whose temporal interests are not involved in existing institutions' (note the covert insinuation!) '*earnestly desire to find the truth.*'—*Dr. Draper*. Would that this were so!

of *perversion for party purposes* has been carried. All this, too, by men whose word in private life might be honourably accepted.

In much the same way this Sceptical bias seems to operate in connection with Bible teaching. Those under its influence are ready to accept the worst possible, that is, the morally lowest, explanation of facts and acts recorded in Bible story, and to reject, we might almost say resent, every other explanation. Nor is this 'bias' confined to the lowest class of Sceptical agitators and objectors. In the works of Mr. J. S. Mill may be found many instances of perversion of Scripture, suggested meanings and interpretations, that would have been rejected with scorn in the case of any other book. Where philosophy, political economy, or ordinary history are in question, there is the greatest effort to be fair and to get at the real facts of the case; the most honourable motives are imputed, and the best construction put upon language that appears ambiguous. Where Bible writers are discussed, and where Bible teachings are concerned, there seems an utter lack of patience and of real desire to enter into the meaning; most noticeable of all, an evident lack of moral sympathy, which is ever needful to the interpreter of any writing. As the outcome of this bias, we have offered to us the most childish interpretations and the most commonplace explanations. Mr. Spencer is perfectly satisfied with the phrase, 'man-like Artificer,' applied by him to the Creator of the world. This philosopher, usually so patient in collecting and arranging his facts, and in correlating his ideas, no sooner comes into contact with the Bible than he becomes slovenly and historically inaccurate. Lord Beaconsfield jokingly said of a lady, for whom he had the sincerest respect, that she never could be persuaded to take any account of chronology, or to remember whether Greeks or Romans came first; so Mr. Spencer gives no place to his favourite idea of evolution when he approaches Bible teaching; but, as Dr. Fairbairn has pointed out, mixes up elements that are historically far apart with sublime indifference. Let any candid reader study Dr. Draper's story of the conflict between religion and science, and he must see how this

bias, of which we speak, mars his best work. Dr. Maudsley again, another of the revered masters of our time, one of the 'advanced thinkers' of the nineteenth century, gives us illustrations of this mental attitude, that would be sad enough were they not so ludicrous. Old Testament history is dealt with by this man of science on principles, or the absence of principles, that would considerably startle an Ewald or a Kuenen, and these are not the men most lacking in boldness or enterprise. On one page he tells us that heaven and hell, if inventions, are extremely good ones ; on another, that the entire basis of the 'doctrine of eternal punishment is fiendish vengeance' ! At one time he reasons as if the moral code of the Jews was of the most narrow, and merely tribal, character ; at another, he tells us how important it is to keep before us the 'ten words,' and daily to pray for grace to keep God's law. Forgetting the 'fiendish vengeance' theory, forgetting also that the Founder of Christianity preaches a doctrine of future punishment most frequently and most solemnly, the learned Doctor reminds us that even science establishes something very like the doctrine of the Trinity, that Christianity has regenerated mankind, has broken down the barriers between man and man, and proclaimed universal brotherhood. Along with this, however, and as if to counteract its tendency, he reminds us that religion drives men mad, and he does his best to explain away all that is distinctive in Bible teaching when opportunity offers itself. These, and other similar feats of exegetical ingenuity, clearly manifest the Sceptical bias of some of the very leaders of scientific thought in our time ; and if the masters speak in this way, what are we to expect from others ? Hence, as Dr. Smyth reminds us, 'popular infidelity has its arrant demagogues, who carry on a notorious business of Atheism on a small capital of scientific thought, and usually borrowed capital besides. Thus a man of fluent wit will go up and down through the Bible and ecclesiastical history, very much as a political stump-speaker will look through the Parliamentary records or national history for the points of his partizan speech. He will begin with Genesis, and find "mistakes of Moses" in abundance. He will

expatiate on the absurdity of the story of the ark. He will pause in dramatic horror before the cruel laws of the Jews. He will single out an imprecatory Psalm or two; and when he comes to the New Testament, he will find in it discrepancies and misstatements enough to prove all the Apostles were little better than literary thieves and robbers.' If this were at all necessary, we could easily furnish proof that these charges are rather under than over the mark. Let those who listen to lecturers, or who read popular writings against religion, say if this is not so! Men in the ordinary business of life considered fair-minded and honourable, seem to lose all sense of right and wrong when they attack the Bible. They cite passage after passage without the slightest reference to subject or context; they give only portions of texts, and these they give skilfully, in order to conceal their real meaning; they hold up to ridicule the frailties and sins of good men, and so create a prejudice against their words and works.

We may lay it down with the utmost confidence as a first principle, a self-evident truth, that no mind biased against Scripture can ever understand its true meaning. Apart altogether from questions about the inspiration and authenticity of this Record, apart even from the solemn themes about which it speaks, viewing it simply as a book, and judging it as any other book must be judged, we can never expect to understand its contents unless we come to it with minds free from bias, and with hearts free from bitter feelings against the writers and their writings. In our country a criminal at the bar receives the aid of a skilled advocate, and, before he is condemned, all that can be said for him is patiently heard. It is not too much to ask from Sceptics that they come to the Bible, if not with feelings of reverence, at least without bitterness and hatred and suspicion. Let them come with sincere desire to see the 'facts as they are;' we ask no more, and common justice ought to lead them to offer no less. If Sceptics will come to the Record in the spirit of honest inquiry, willing to learn what it has to teach, willing to change their thought about its contents, if compelled by the evidence, we believe they will

soon have good reason to be ashamed of the 'bias' against the Bible of which we have spoken.

First of all, they will find, even looking at this subject from a purely exterior stand-point, that some of the noblest thinkers that have ever lived have loved this Book, have given it a place in their affections and in their life, given to no other writings. Speaking on the subject of religion, and referring to the question as to whether there 'exists a Creator and Ruler of the Universe,' Darwin remarks that this question has been 'answered in the affirmative by some of the highest intellects that have ever existed.' The great naturalist, who was one of the most unassuming of men, evidently attached importance to the opinions of the wisest men. He would not, of course, say that this proved the truth of their view, but he would feel,—all truly humble intellects must feel,—that it created a strong presumption in favour of the doctrine so universally accepted. What Homer and Plato, Moses and Paul, Dante and Milton, Shakespeare and Goethe, Kant and Hegel, all agree about may not be true, but he will indeed be a bold man who can place his own opinion against authority of this sort. Apply this to the subject before us: A book, or, to speak more correctly, a literature that has been accepted and loved by the noblest thinkers and most Christ-like men and women for more than two thousand years, ought not to be set aside with sneers, as it is often set aside, by the Sceptics of our century. Men may sneer at the Mosaic legislation; even from a sanitary point of view, as a learned chemist has reminded us, this code will bear very favourable comparison with nineteenth century regulations! It is easy to ridicule some things in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis, and yet the truths there taught have been grand moral forces in society, elevating and purifying human thought and life. Sceptics are never weary of pointing to the imperfections of David, and the laxity of some moral ideas found in the Hebrew Psalter; it is a matter of fact that no 'single book of Scripture, not even of the New Testament, has, perhaps, ever taken such hold on the heart of Christendom.'¹

¹ See introduction to Perowne's 'Commentary on the Psalms.'

Some of the men who have done the most to mould the world's thought, and shape its spiritual life, for the last twelve centuries, have considered this one of the most precious of books. Spirits the bravest and most saintly, even with the higher, softer, and steadier light of the New Testament shining upon them, have made this Psalter their bosom friend ; it has comforted them in sorrow, it has cheered them in hours of depression and weakness ; it has been found by their dying beds, its well-thumbed pages wet with their last penitential tears. We do not say that hostile criticism is disarmed by such facts, but we do affirm that in their presence the mental attitude of the Sceptic is most unworthy. The healthy tastes of healthy men and women, and not the sickly palates of a few distinguished dyspeptics, are the best guide for the wise and strong, and for those who desire to be wise and strong. In our day, some of the ablest thinkers and profoundest critics are studying the writings of Apostles and Prophets ; they are subjecting everything to the keenest and most scientific tests that can be applied to any literature, and yet the more they search, the more they are convinced that this is no ordinary Book. They are studying, too, under conditions more favourable than were possible to some of their fore-fathers, with all the facts about other religions, and about the spiritual history of other ages, before them. The more they compare this with that, the more they study the forces at work and the resulting products, the more thoroughly they are persuaded that *Sceptical theories and explanations of the Bible are impossible* ; the ordinary forces at work in the religions of men never produced these wonderful results. Thus the Bible itself, fairly read and deeply studied, gives evidence not to be gainsaid, that other than earthly elements enter into this problem. As one well says, 'it was no blind chance, and no mere human wisdom, that shaped the growth of Israel's religion, and finally stamped it in these forms, now so strange to us, which preserved the living seed of the Divine Word until the fulness of the time when He was manifested who transformed the religion of Israel into a religion for all mankind.' If this be the effect produced upon honest minds by the study even of the *Old*

Testament (and much more might be said of the *New*), may we not in all fairness ask the Sceptic to shake himself free from the trammels of this unreasoning bias against the Book, and to give it an honest and thorough examination? Not only has it been passionately loved by the saintliest of the race, not only has it helped them alike in life and in death, but it has compelled the critic to listen, and to confess that its voice is not like the voice of any other literature.

Another characteristic of this literature, which, apart from any claim to inspiration or Divine authority, ought to commend it to truth-loving minds, is the *evident truthfulness and sincerity of its writers*. Even an outsider may feel the force of this element in Bible story. In this book we find much biography, often very attractively written, but there is a marked absence of anything like *hero-worship*. The writers tell their story with the most artless and childlike simplicity, leaving it to produce its own natural effect on the mind of the hearer. There is also much autobiography in this record, but the writers seem able to speak of themselves and their doings as if they had no desire to appear other than they really were. Faults and failings, strength and weakness, successes and failures are all given, without any attempt at either concealment or self-glorification. They state the 'facts as they are,' and are indifferent to either praise or blame,—do not appear, indeed, to take any account of these in their writing. Sceptics often speak of the sins and weaknesses of Old Testament worthies; they do not explain how it came about that the very men themselves should have so readily furnished the materials for hostile criticism! Had these writings been intended simply to glorify certain great leaders,—to set forth the great deeds and noble characters of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and others,—is it conceivable that they would have told the frailties as well as the great virtues of these heroes? We read of Abraham's heroic faith,—that faith which made him the 'father of the faithful, and the friend of God'; we read also of his cowardly weakness, and of how, in honour and in honesty, he was far surpassed by a heathen prince. We read that Lot's spirit was grieved by the

wickedness of Sodom and the cities of the plain ; we also read of his ambition for well-watered plains, for pre-eminence in Sodom, and of his having learned the ways of the people among whom he lived. The treachery of Jacob, as well as his great prosperity, his visions and revelations, is faithfully narrated. The impatience, as well as the meekness, of the great Lawgiver is duly chronicled. David is not surrounded with much of the 'divinity that doth hedge' kings in the biographies of their admirers; and the moral folly and wickedness of Solomon is set forth as truthfully as the greatness of his intellectual wisdom and the splendour of his court. The same thing is seen in the sober pages of the New Testament. No attempt is made to glorify the Apostles of Jesus Christ, or to set them forth as men in whom no fault could be found. Peter's denial, with the accompanying oaths and curses, John's fiery zeal, the strife of Paul and Barnabas, are all told with simple candour. This is not the method of either ancient or modern writers. Let these records be compared with the annals of ancient times, with the lives of the saints or the books of the martyrs, with the histories of Assyrian monarchies, records that give successes but none of the failures of kings and great men, and the difference must be apparent to all. Scholars are amazed at the remarkable contrast between the Chaldean account of the Creation, 'patiently deciphered from the broken tablets of the Royal Library at Nineveh,' and the simple story of the Book of Genesis. The same contrast is everywhere met, whether the story relate to some saint of God, or to some great earthly monarch. The Jews, as a people, have certainly never been wanting in that *patriotism* which considers its own nation the only nation, and which glorifies itself at the expense of all other peoples. None of this narrow and narrowing patriotism is found in the Prophets of Israel ; they keep before the nation a noble Ideal,—that Ideal which made Abraham leave home and kindred and wander over the face of the earth,—that in *Israel all nations should be blessed*. All through the sacred books we find records of the narrower stream of merely Jewish prejudice, while the Book itself and its

great makers ever teach that wider and more exalted view,—*Israel* great not for itself, but in order that all the earth might receive blessing.

In view of facts like these, patent on the very face of this great literature, so unusual in connection with all other literatures, not to be found, even now, in the history and biography of even the most advanced nations, it behoves the Sceptic to consider more carefully his relation to this wonderful book. These facts are not invented by us for apologetic purposes ; there they are, lying on the very face of this record, inviting the examination of everyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear.

Still keeping mainly to exterior marks, we would suggest that the *unity* of this literature is one of its most striking features. Fully to discuss this would lead us far beyond the merely external side of Bible history and teaching ; but even from an outside point of view this phenomenon is sufficiently significant, and, as Professor Leathes remarks, is ‘ unique in the history and literature of the world.’ The very name *Bible* suggests unity, but it may often conceal from the careless reader the extent and character of this element in the problem. For the Bible is, after all, not so much a book in the ordinary sense as a collection of books, or, as one puts it, ‘ a library.’ The writings of the *Old Testament* alone ‘ extend over a period of at least a thousand years.’ The writers are often unknown ; they belong to all ranks and conditions of men ; they are separated by immense tracts of country, and still more by intellectual and social character and habits. Their views of life must necessarily have been very diverse, as the conditions under which they lived were most unlike. And yet even a cursory reading shows that we have here *one Book* ; a deeper study will make manifest that through this literature, as through the ages of human history, ‘ one increasing purpose runs,’ and that the thoughts of the men who made it were ever being widened and deepened as they drew nearer the fulness of the time when the Christ, who is the key to the book, should appear. This unity does not consist in any mechanical uniformity of plan, nor in any dramatic re-

hearsal at different stages of the essential history of the future, but in the orderly evolution of a grand moral purpose, and in the progressive development of an idea which is ever the same. This aspect of Bible literature is being very fully illustrated by the very criticism of our time which some timid Christians so much fear. Owing perhaps, in part, to narrow conceptions of the nature of inspiration, owing to a very laudable desire to exalt the Bible history and to keep it from too close contact with purely human ideas and affairs, the apologists of the past have hardly done justice to the human side of this process. The attempts of able, but rationalistic, thinkers to give an account of the origin and development of this literature which shall be sufficient, and which shall exclude, at the same time, all that is supernatural, have only more fully and more prominently illustrated the peculiar character of the book, and the impossibility of accounting for its *unity* on rationalistic principles. The doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest' when applied to it, breaks down: 'Here is an evolution not in accordance with the natural tendency to variation, and contrary to the immediate historical environment. The development of the Bible and the religion of the Bible makes head, seemingly against the natural gravitation of the Israelitish history. . . . It is difficult to explain the progress, order, and unity of purpose in the Bible, unless we take into the account something more than individual genius, national temperament, and peculiar historical conditions. There seems to be some power behind all these, co-ordinating them, arranging and guiding, for the production of *this organic whole of the Scriptures*.'¹ This witness is true; we cannot read with any degree of attention this wonderful record without feeling that it is, so to speak, an *organism*, and that from first to last it has grown, and is growing before our eyes. Taking into account the diversity, mental, social, and otherwise, of its writers, the anonymous and apparently fugitive character of many of its publications, their manifest local uses and references; taking also the wide interval that elapsed between Old and New Testaments, and yet that the one is the fulfilment of the

¹ Newman Smyth.

other, and that in a most wonderful manner, we must conclude that this is no mere collection of sacred writings in which part has been added to part, cell to cell, after the manner of 'Semitic' builders alone. The book is *one*, and behind its earthly makers there must have been a divine Power, moulding, shaping, and guiding. Let the Sceptic fairly face this problem, and he will see that there is unity in the book ; let him compare and contrast it with the sacred writings of other religions, let him place it alongside the creations of 'Semitic genius' that are known to man, and he must own that this is no work of frail humanity. 'After all the work of the critics, the Bible will still remain, (not only one, but) the great, sublime, enduring work of the Eternal, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity.'

We have already drawn attention to the manifest absence of anything like hero-worship in the pages of the Bible ; we may go further along the same lines, and assert that *the evident intention of all Bible teaching is to exalt God* rather than to honour man. If we read the national records of any people, whether ancient or modern, we find everywhere traces of strong self-consciousness. The speech of the Town Clerk of Ephesus, when he sought to quiet the people and appease the angry feelings of his fellow citizens, is almost a model in this respect. He appeals to the *national vanity* with consummate tact and skill : 'Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there who knoweth not how the city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter.' Every citizen ought to assume as a self-evident proposition the essential greatness of Ephesus ! So speaks national vanity everywhere, whether in Europe or Asia. With this class among ourselves, 'English interests' take precedence not only of the interests of all other peoples, but of the moral law itself ; who has not read, even in apologetic works, of the providential mission of the great German race ? So it ever is ; whether Slav or Saxon, whether Jew or Gentile, no State, however small or however great, is deficient in this self-assertion. Now, the

Bible writers were all Jews, and Israel held a peculiar position in the history of the world. No Greek or Roman could feel exactly about *Barbarians* as the proud Jew felt about the Gentile. Against this narrowness some of the ancient Prophets struggled nobly, if in vain. They believed in Israel's mission, and in the destiny of the chosen people, but they gave no quarter to a feeling which is simply vanity and conceit.¹ More than this, they even taught that Israel's proud position was *God's gift, and not the outcome of its own energy or ability*. The very superiority which it did possess it received from God, and that in spite of its selfish efforts to frustrate His plan and destroy His counsel. The story of Israel in the wilderness, the distinctive teaching of the greatest Prophets, the exile and temporary eclipse of Israel, all proclaim how differently this Book regards these things. Its aim is ever to exalt God, and to glorify man only as he helps to fulfil the Divine purposes.

This thought is capable of a much wider application, and may be said to be one of the distinctive notes of Bible teaching. From first to last man is humbled and God exalted in this Book ; it teaches man to refuse 'great things for himself,' and to seek his own highest honour in the honour of the Eternal. The superficial reader misses all this; he sees, especially if he comes to the Book with the sceptical bias, the apparent exaltation of a petty tribe over all the great nations; he sees Jacob the supplanter put higher than Esau the free-hearted and generous; from first to last, if we believe him, there is to be found nothing but arbitrary selection of the least worthy among men and nations. A deeper acquaintance with the Book corrects this estimate, and shows that from Genesis to Revelation God alone is exalted. Yet no book gives man a

¹ The great historian Niebuhr remarks: 'The Old Testament stands perfectly alone as an exception from the untruth of patriotism; it never conceals and disguises the calamities of the nation whose history it records. Its truthfulness is the highest in all historical writings—even for him who does not believe in its divine inspiration. At the same time I must also ascribe to it the most minute accuracy.'—See Dr. Saphir's 'Christ and the Scriptures,' p. 52.

truly higher place ; it makes him to lack but a little of God-head, and it crowns him with glory and honour. It makes angelic beings minister to him, and the very Son of God die to save him ; it so represents life that the highest and worthiest objects attainable are man's salvation and exaltation ; the very happiness of heaven being enhanced by the salvation of one human soul ! The Bible gives to *man* a place higher than he receives in any other literature, but it gives this under such conditions that God, not man, receives the homage. And the very homage given to man by the Bible is a homage offered to God ; it is ever the Divine condescension that makes man great.

From a purely exterior stand-point it is impossible to develop fully this idea, or to show its bearing upon the spiritual future of humanity ; and yet it ought with candid minds to be a note in favour of any book, this element of extreme unselfishness, this true and uniform subordination of man to the Power which made him, and which is shaping his destiny. Writers who seek no honour for themselves, who ever exalt the Supreme Goodness, and who teach man that he owes all he has and is to the gift of God, ought to be considered worthy of a respectful hearing. The anthropology as well as the theology of this Book ought to commend it to the truth-seeking mind.

Moreover, we cannot overlook in this Book the *hopefulness of its tone, and the wholesomeness of its influence* over all who submit life to its sway.

No part of the record has been more eagerly dwelt upon by Sceptics than some of its earlier moral histories. A secular lecturer says with a sneer, most uncalled-for, 'the Bible, with its beautiful stories of Noah, Lot, Dinah, Tamar, and the rest, to inform the intellect and purify the heart of the young !' Sneering is an easy, but not often a convincing, form of argument. Darwin retorts on those who sneer at his lowly views of man's origin, that by this very act they illustrate the truth of his theory, inasmuch as they show their 'canine teeth' ! Without going this length, we may fairly say that those who sneer at these ancient stories often show more their own blindness and incapacity, than the moral feebleness of the history they so

attack. Whatever else may be said or left unsaid, it must be confessed by all that the *moral tone* of the book is high. True, the writers call a spade a spade with great plainness of speech; they also record sad and even disgusting instances of man's depravity; but no pure mind will ever suppose that the writers sympathize with these immoralities. Critics of the morality of the Bible will do well to lay to heart some remarks of Dr. Pusey in his introduction to the 'Confessions of St. Augustine.' 'The purity of our times,' says the learned doctor, 'is not the purity of the Gospel; it is the purity of those who know and have delighted in evil as well as good. It is often the hypocritical purity which would willingly dwell upon "things which ought not to be named," *so that it does but not name them*,' etc. If the Bible-writers glorified such sins, or called them virtues because committed by the founders of the Hebrew Commonwealth, protest might be made. These atrocities are recorded, at times with almost brutal bluntness, to show that no position, however exalted, and no Divine favour, however unusual, can raise man above the necessity of constant watchfulness and humility. No one with a sympathetic mind and open heart can be at any loss how to think about these evils, so plainly described in the Sacred Writings. As to the narrative itself, we must remember, as Canon Mozley has well said, that the 'end is the test of a progressive Revelation.' Modern 'freethought' professes to be much shocked and scandalized at some of these ancient records, yet itself has propounded doctrines, as the 'Fruits of its Philosophy,' about marriage and family life, that would have much perturbed the minds of Old Testament teachers. An age like ours, often so licentious in dress and manners, in spite of the thin veil of its outward propriety, so greedy of Divorce Court literature, and so prolific in 'society' journals, may attempt to sit in judgment on the morality of the Old Testament, but it can hardly expect those who have drunk deeply at these ancient wells of moral inspiration to listen with deference to its words.


No one in full sympathy with the Bible teaching as a whole

¹ See Canon Mozley's 'Lectures on the Old Testament.'

great makers ever teach that wider and more exalted view,—*Israel* great not for itself, but in order that all the earth might receive blessing.

In view of facts like these, patent on the very face of this great literature, so unusual in connection with all other literatures, not to be found, even now, in the history and biography of even the most advanced nations, it behoves the Sceptic to consider more carefully his relation to this wonderful book. These facts are not invented by us for apologetic purposes ; there they are, lying on the very face of this record, inviting the examination of everyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear.

Still keeping mainly to exterior marks, we would suggest that the *unity* of this literature is one of its most striking features. Fully to discuss this would lead us far beyond the merely external side of Bible history and teaching ; but even from an outside point of view this phenomenon is sufficiently significant, and, as Professor Leathes remarks, is ‘ unique in the history and literature of the world.’ The very name *Bible* suggests unity, but it may often conceal from the careless reader the extent and character of this element in the problem. For the Bible is, after all, not so much a book in the ordinary sense as a collection of books, or, as one puts it, ‘ a library.’ The writings of the *Old Testament* alone ‘ extend over a period of at least a thousand years.’ The writers are often unknown ; they belong to all ranks and conditions of men ; they are separated by immense tracts of country, and still more by intellectual and social character and habits. Their views of life must necessarily have been very diverse, as the conditions under which they lived were most unlike. And yet even a cursory reading shows that we have here *one Book* ; a deeper study will make manifest that through this literature, as through the ages of human history, ‘ one increasing purpose runs,’ and that the thoughts of the men who made it were ever being widened and deepened as they drew nearer the fulness of the time when the Christ, who is the key to the book, should appear. This unity does not consist in any mechanical uniformity of plan, nor in any dramatic re-



hearsal at different stages of the essential history of the future, but in the orderly evolution of a grand moral purpose, and in the progressive development of an idea which is ever the same. This aspect of Bible literature is being very fully illustrated by the very criticism of our time which some timid Christians so much fear. Owing perhaps, in part, to narrow conceptions of the nature of inspiration, owing to a very laudable desire to exalt the Bible history and to keep it from too close contact with purely human ideas and affairs, the apologists of the past have hardly done justice to the human side of this process. The attempts of able, but rationalistic, thinkers to give an account of the origin and development of this literature which shall be sufficient, and which shall exclude, at the same time, all that is supernatural, have only more fully and more prominently illustrated the peculiar character of the book, and the impossibility of accounting for its *unity* on rationalistic principles. The doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest' when applied to it, breaks down: 'Here is an evolution not in accordance with the natural tendency to variation, and contrary to the immediate historical environment. The development of the Bible and the religion of the Bible makes head, seemingly against the natural gravitation of the Israelitish history. . . . It is difficult to explain the progress, order, and unity of purpose in the Bible, unless we take into the account something more than individual genius, national temperament, and peculiar historical conditions. There seems to be some power behind all these, co-ordinating them, arranging and guiding, for the production of *this organic whole of the Scriptures*.'¹ This witness is true; we cannot read with any degree of attention this wonderful record without feeling that it is, so to speak, an *organism*, and that from first to last it has grown, and is growing before our eyes. Taking into account the diversity, mental, social, and otherwise, of its writers, the anonymous and apparently fugitive character of many of its publications, their manifest local uses and references; taking also the wide interval that elapsed between Old and New Testaments, and yet that the one is the fulfilment of the

¹ Newman Smyth.

great makers ever teach that wider and more exalted view,—*Israel* great not for itself, but in order that all the earth might receive blessing.

In view of facts like these, patent on the very face of this great literature, so unusual in connection with all other literatures, not to be found, even now, in the history and biography of even the most advanced nations, it behoves the Sceptic to consider more carefully his relation to this wonderful book. These facts are not invented by us for apologetic purposes ; there they are, lying on the very face of this record, inviting the examination of everyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear.

Still keeping mainly to exterior marks, we would suggest that the *unity* of this literature is one of its most striking features. Fully to discuss this would lead us far beyond the merely external side of Bible history and teaching ; but even from an outside point of view this phenomenon is sufficiently significant, and, as Professor Leathes remarks, is ‘ unique in the history and literature of the world.’ The very name *Bible* suggests unity, but it may often conceal from the careless reader the extent and character of this element in the problem. For the Bible is, after all, not so much a book in the ordinary sense as a collection of books, or, as one puts it, ‘ a library.’ The writings of the *Old Testament* alone ‘ extend over a period of at least a thousand years.’ The writers are often unknown ; they belong to all ranks and conditions of men ; they are separated by immense tracts of country, and still more by intellectual and social character and habits. Their views of life must necessarily have been very diverse, as the conditions under which they lived were most unlike. And yet even a cursory reading shows that we have here *one Book* ; a deeper study will make manifest that through this literature, as through the ages of human history, ‘ one increasing purpose runs,’ and that the thoughts of the men who made it were ever being widened and deepened as they drew nearer the fulness of the time when the Christ, who is the key to the book, should appear. This unity does not consist in any mechanical uniformity of plan, nor in any dramatic re-


hearsal at different stages of the essential history of the future, but in the orderly evolution of a grand moral purpose, and in the progressive development of an idea which is ever the same. This aspect of Bible literature is being very fully illustrated by the very criticism of our time which some timid Christians so much fear. Owing perhaps, in part, to narrow conceptions of the nature of inspiration, owing to a very laudable desire to exalt the Bible history and to keep it from too close contact with purely human ideas and affairs, the apologists of the past have hardly done justice to the human side of this process. The attempts of able, but rationalistic, thinkers to give an account of the origin and development of this literature which shall be sufficient, and which shall exclude, at the same time, all that is supernatural, have only more fully and more prominently illustrated the peculiar character of the book, and the impossibility of accounting for its *unity* on rationalistic principles. The doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest' when applied to it, breaks down: 'Here is an evolution not in accordance with the natural tendency to variation, and contrary to the immediate historical environment. The development of the Bible and the religion of the Bible makes head, seemingly against the natural gravitation of the Israelitish history. . . . It is difficult to explain the progress, order, and unity of purpose in the Bible, unless we take into the account something more than individual genius, national temperament, and peculiar historical conditions. There seems to be some power behind all these, co-ordinating them, arranging and guiding, for the production of *this organic whole of the Scriptures*.'¹ This witness is true; we cannot read with any degree of attention this wonderful record without feeling that it is, so to speak, an *organism*, and that from first to last it has grown, and is growing before our eyes. Taking into account the diversity, mental, social, and otherwise, of its writers, the anonymous and apparently fugitive character of many of its publications, their manifest local uses and references; taking also the wide interval that elapsed between Old and New Testaments, and yet that the one is the fulfilment of the

¹ Newman Smyth.

great makers ever teach that wider and more exalted view,—*Israel* great not for itself, but in order that all the earth might receive blessing.

In view of facts like these, patent on the very face of this great literature, so unusual in connection with all other literatures, not to be found, even now, in the history and biography of even the most advanced nations, it behoves the Sceptic to consider more carefully his relation to this wonderful book. These facts are not invented by us for apologetic purposes; there they are, lying on the very face of this record, inviting the examination of everyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear.

Still keeping mainly to exterior marks, we would suggest that the *unity* of this literature is one of its most striking features. Fully to discuss this would lead us far beyond the merely external side of Bible history and teaching; but even from an outside point of view this phenomenon is sufficiently significant, and, as Professor Leathes remarks, is ‘unique in the history and literature of the world.’ The very name *Bible* suggests unity, but it may often conceal from the careless reader the extent and character of this element in the problem. For the Bible is, after all, not so much a book in the ordinary sense as a collection of books, or, as one puts it, ‘a library.’ The writings of the *Old Testament* alone ‘extend over a period of at least a thousand years.’ The writers are often unknown; they belong to all ranks and conditions of men; they are separated by immense tracts of country, and still more by intellectual and social character and habits. Their views of life must necessarily have been very diverse, as the conditions under which they lived were most unlike. And yet even a cursory reading shows that we have here *one Book*; a deeper study will make manifest that through this literature, as through the ages of human history, ‘one increasing purpose runs,’ and that the thoughts of the men who made it were ever being widened and deepened as they drew nearer the fulness of the time when the Christ, who is the key to the book, should appear. This unity does not consist in any mechanical uniformity of plan, nor in any dramatic re-



hearsal at different stages of the essential history of the future, but in the orderly evolution of a grand moral purpose, and in the progressive development of an idea which is ever the same. This aspect of Bible literature is being very fully illustrated by the very criticism of our time which some timid Christians so much fear. Owing perhaps, in part, to narrow conceptions of the nature of inspiration, owing to a very laudable desire to exalt the Bible history and to keep it from too close contact with purely human ideas and affairs, the apologists of the past have hardly done justice to the human side of this process. The attempts of able, but rationalistic, thinkers to give an account of the origin and development of this literature which shall be sufficient, and which shall exclude, at the same time, all that is supernatural, have only more fully and more prominently illustrated the peculiar character of the book, and the impossibility of accounting for its *unity* on rationalistic principles. The doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest' when applied to it, breaks down: 'Here is an evolution not in accordance with the natural tendency to variation, and contrary to the immediate historical environment. The development of the Bible and the religion of the Bible makes head, seemingly against the natural gravitation of the Israelitish history. . . . It is difficult to explain the progress, order, and unity of purpose in the Bible, unless we take into the account something more than individual genius, national temperament, and peculiar historical conditions. There seems to be some power behind all these, co-ordinating them, arranging and guiding, for the production of *this organic whole of the Scriptures*.'¹ This witness is true; we cannot read with any degree of attention this wonderful record without feeling that it is, so to speak, an *organism*, and that from first to last it has grown, and is growing before our eyes. Taking into account the diversity, mental, social, and otherwise, of its writers, the anonymous and apparently fugitive character of many of its publications, their manifest local uses and references; taking also the wide interval that elapsed between Old and New Testaments, and yet that the one is the fulfilment of the

¹ Newman Smyth.

bias, of which we speak, mars his best work. Dr. Maudsley again, another of the revered masters of our time, one of the 'advanced thinkers' of the nineteenth century, gives us illustrations of this mental attitude, that would be sad enough were they not so ludicrous. Old Testament history is dealt with by this man of science on principles, or the absence of principles, that would considerably startle an Ewald or a Kuenen, and these are not the men most lacking in boldness or enterprise. On one page he tells us that heaven and hell, if inventions, are extremely good ones ; on another, that the entire basis of the 'doctrine of eternal punishment is fiendish vengeance' ! At one time he reasons as if the moral code of the Jews was of the most narrow, and merely tribal, character ; at another, he tells us how important it is to keep before us the 'ten words,' and daily to pray for grace to keep God's law. Forgetting the 'fiendish vengeance' theory, forgetting also that the Founder of Christianity preaches a doctrine of future punishment most frequently and most solemnly, the learned Doctor reminds us that even science establishes something very like the doctrine of the Trinity, that Christianity has regenerated mankind, has broken down the barriers between man and man, and proclaimed universal brotherhood. Along with this, however, and as if to counteract its tendency, he reminds us that religion drives men mad, and he does his best to explain away all that is distinctive in Bible teaching when opportunity offers itself. These, and other similar feats of exegetical ingenuity, clearly manifest the Sceptical bias of some of the very leaders of scientific thought in our time ; and if the masters speak in this way, what are we to expect from others ? Hence, as Dr. Smyth reminds us, 'popular infidelity has its arrant demagogues, who carry on a notorious business of Atheism on a small capital of scientific thought, and usually borrowed capital besides. Thus a man of fluent wit will go up and down through the Bible and ecclesiastical history, very much as a political stump-speaker will look through the Parliamentary records or national history for the points of his partizan speech. He will begin with Genesis, and find "mistakes of Moses" in abundance. He will

expatiate on the absurdity of the story of the ark. He will pause in dramatic horror before the cruel laws of the Jews. He will single out an imprecatory Psalm or two; and when he comes to the New Testament, he will find in it discrepancies and misstatements enough to prove all the Apostles were little better than literary thieves and robbers.' If this were at all necessary, we could easily furnish proof that these charges are rather under than over the mark. Let those who listen to lecturers, or who read popular writings against religion, say if this is not so! Men in the ordinary business of life considered fair-minded and honourable, seem to lose all sense of right and wrong when they attack the Bible. They cite passage after passage without the slightest reference to subject or context; they give only portions of texts, and these they give skilfully, in order to conceal their real meaning; they hold up to ridicule the frailties and sins of good men, and so create a prejudice against their words and works.

We may lay it down with the utmost confidence as a first principle, a self-evident truth, that no mind biased against Scripture can ever understand its true meaning. Apart altogether from questions about the inspiration and authenticity of this Record, apart even from the solemn themes about which it speaks, viewing it simply as a book, and judging it as any other book must be judged, we can never expect to understand its contents unless we come to it with minds free from bias, and with hearts free from bitter feelings against the writers and their writings. In our country a criminal at the bar receives the aid of a skilled advocate, and, before he is condemned, all that can be said for him is patiently heard. It is not too much to ask from Sceptics that they come to the Bible, if not with feelings of reverence, at least without bitterness and hatred and suspicion. Let them come with sincere desire to see the 'facts as they are;' we ask no more, and common justice ought to lead them to offer no less. If Sceptics will come to the Record in the spirit of honest inquiry, willing to learn what it has to teach, willing to change their thought about its contents, if compelled by the evidence, we believe they will

truly higher place; it makes him to lack but a little of God-head, and it crowns him with glory and honour. It makes angelic beings minister to him, and the very Son of God die to save him; it so represents life that the highest and worthiest objects attainable are man's salvation and exaltation; the very happiness of heaven being enhanced by the salvation of one human soul! The Bible gives to *man* a place higher than he receives in any other literature, but it gives this under such conditions that God, not man, receives the homage. And the very homage given to man by the Bible is a homage offered to God; it is ever the Divine condescension that makes man great.

From a purely exterior stand-point it is impossible to develop fully this idea, or to show its bearing upon the spiritual future of humanity; and yet it ought with candid minds to be a note in favour of any book, this element of extreme unselfishness, this true and uniform subordination of man to the Power which made him, and which is shaping his destiny. Writers who seek no honour for themselves, who ever exalt the Supreme Goodness, and who teach man that he owes all he has and is to the gift of God, ought to be considered worthy of a respectful hearing. The anthropology as well as the theology of this Book ought to commend it to the truth-seeking mind.

Moreover, we cannot overlook in this Book the *hopefulness of its tone, and the wholesomeness of its influence* over all who submit life to its sway.

No part of the record has been more eagerly dwelt upon by Sceptics than some of its earlier moral histories. A secular lecturer says with a sneer, most uncalled-for, 'the Bible, with its beautiful stories of Noah, Lot, Dinah, Tamar, and the rest, to inform the intellect and purify the heart of the young!' Sneering is an easy, but not often a convincing, form of argument. Darwin retorts on those who sneer at his lowly views of man's origin, that by this very act they illustrate the truth of his theory, inasmuch as they show their 'canine teeth'! Without going this length, we may fairly say that those who sneer at these ancient stories often show more their own blindness and incapacity, than the moral feebleness of the history they so

attack. Whatever else may be said or left unsaid, it must be confessed by all that the *moral tone* of the book is high. True, the writers call a spade a spade with great plainness of speech; they also record sad and even disgusting instances of man's depravity; but no pure mind will ever suppose that the writers sympathize with these immoralities. Critics of the morality of the Bible will do well to lay to heart some remarks of Dr. Pusey in his introduction to the 'Confessions of St. Augustine.' 'The purity of our times,' says the learned doctor, 'is not the purity of the Gospel; it is the purity of those who know and have delighted in evil as well as good. It is often the hypocritical purity which would willingly dwell upon "things which ought not to be named," so that it does but not name them,' etc. If the Bible-writers glorified such sins, or called them virtues because committed by the founders of the Hebrew Commonwealth, protest might be made. These atrocities are recorded, at times with almost brutal bluntness, to show that no position, however exalted, and no Divine favour, however unusual, can raise man above the necessity of constant watchfulness and humility. No one with a sympathetic mind and open heart can be at any loss how to think about these evils, so plainly described in the Sacred Writings. As to the narrative itself, we must remember, as Canon Mozley has well said, that the 'end is the test of a progressive Revelation.' Modern 'freethought' professes to be much shocked and scandalized at some of these ancient records, yet itself has propounded doctrines, as the 'Fruits of its Philosophy,' about marriage and family life, that would have much perturbed the minds of Old Testament teachers. An age like ours, often so licentious in dress and manners, in spite of the thin veil of its outward propriety, so greedy of Divorce Court literature, and so prolific in 'society' journals, may attempt to sit in judgment on the morality of the Old Testament, but it can hardly expect those who have drunk deeply at these ancient wells of moral inspiration to listen with deference to its words.

No one in full sympathy with the Bible teaching as a whole

¹ See Canon Mozley's 'Lectures on the Old Testament.'

truly higher place; it makes him to lack but a little of God-head, and it crowns him with glory and honour. It makes angelic beings minister to him, and the very Son of God die to save him; it so represents life that the highest and worthiest objects attainable are man's salvation and exaltation; the very happiness of heaven being enhanced by the salvation of one human soul! The Bible gives to *man* a place higher than he receives in any other literature, but it gives this under such conditions that God, not man, receives the homage. And the very homage given to man by the Bible is a homage offered to God; it is ever the Divine condescension that makes man great.

From a purely exterior stand-point it is impossible to develop fully this idea, or to show its bearing upon the spiritual future of humanity; and yet it ought with candid minds to be a note in favour of any book, this element of extreme unselfishness, this true and uniform subordination of man to the Power which made him, and which is shaping his destiny. Writers who seek no honour for themselves, who ever exalt the Supreme Goodness, and who teach man that he owes all he has and is to the gift of God, ought to be considered worthy of a respectful hearing. The anthropology as well as the theology of this Book ought to commend it to the truth-seeking mind.

Moreover, we cannot overlook in this Book the *hopefulness of its tone, and the wholesomeness of its influence* over all who submit life to its sway.

No part of the record has been more eagerly dwelt upon by Sceptics than some of its earlier moral histories. A secular lecturer says with a sneer, most uncalled-for, 'the Bible, with its beautiful stories of Noah, Lot, Dinah, Tamar, and the rest, to inform the intellect and purify the heart of the young!' Sneering is an easy, but not often a convincing, form of argument. Darwin retorts on those who sneer at his lowly views of man's origin, that by this very act they illustrate the truth of his theory, inasmuch as they show their 'canine teeth'! Without going this length, we may fairly say that those who sneer at these ancient stories often show more their own blindness and incapacity, than the moral feebleness of the history they so

attack. Whatever else may be said or left unsaid, it must be confessed by all that the *moral tone* of the book is high. True, the writers call a spade a spade with great plainness of speech; they also record sad and even disgusting instances of man's depravity; but no pure mind will ever suppose that the writers sympathize with these immoralities. Critics of the morality of the Bible will do well to lay to heart some remarks of Dr. Pusey in his introduction to the 'Confessions of St. Augustine.' 'The purity of our times,' says the learned doctor, 'is not the purity of the Gospel; it is the purity of those who know and have delighted in evil as well as good. It is often the hypocritical purity which would willingly dwell upon "things which ought not to be named," so that it does but not name them,' etc. If the Bible-writers glorified such sins, or called them virtues because committed by the founders of the Hebrew Commonwealth, protest might be made. These atrocities are recorded, at times with almost brutal bluntness, to show that no position, however exalted, and no Divine favour, however unusual, can raise man above the necessity of constant watchfulness and humility. No one with a sympathetic mind and open heart can be at any loss how to think about these evils, so plainly described in the Sacred Writings. As to the narrative itself, we must remember, as Canon Mozley has well said, that the 'end is the test of a progressive Revelation.' Modern 'freethought' professes to be much shocked and scandalized at some of these ancient records, yet itself has propounded doctrines, as the 'Fruits of its Philosophy,' about marriage and family life, that would have much perturbed the minds of Old Testament teachers. An age like ours, often so licentious in dress and manners, in spite of the thin veil of its outward propriety, so greedy of Divorce Court literature, and so prolific in 'society' journals, may attempt to sit in judgment on the morality of the Old Testament, but it can hardly expect those who have drunk deeply at these ancient wells of moral inspiration to listen with deference to its words.

No one in full sympathy with the Bible teaching as a whole

¹ See Canon Mozley's 'Lectures on the Old Testament.'

can have anything but healthy views of life ; its simple directness of language, its purity of feeling, its moral elevation of thought, have been acknowledged by all the masters of knowledge. Its teachers pronounce a severe woe on those who pervert men's minds by either language or symbol, and themselves ever show an example of true moral courage in calling things by their right names. As to the stories of Noah, Lot, and others, we must remember that the Bible is a book of history, and that the men connected with the evolution of God's redeeming purpose never claimed for themselves, nor had claimed for them by their biographers, any title to moral perfection. The history itself, when carefully studied, is the best rebuke of their sinful deeds ; if there is no immediate expression of condemnation, the subsequent events generally manifest Divine displeasure ; they receive the 'fruit of their doings' in character and life. Nor can anyone fail to understand what Prophets and teachers think of such transgressions of Divine law.

The tone and teaching of the whole book, or of the book as a whole, are remarkably hopeful and healthy. We are often reminded by the champions of Scepticism that the Bible is a gloomy book, and that its views of life are such as to chill the feelings and discourage all effort after enjoyment ; the gloom of the Sabbath, and the ultra-Puritanical rigour of Old Testament precepts are often commented upon. These are products of the scientific 'imagination' rather than true findings of sober search after fact. Where is there proof from the Bible that even the 'Jewish Sabbath' was the gloomy thing it is sometimes said to have been ? If such proof be forthcoming it must be found, not in the original law, not in the example of patriarchs and prophets, but in the customs of the rigid Pharisees of later days ; we decline to allow Pharisees, whether ancient or modern, to be our interpreters of a Divine Revelation.

No honest student of the religion of Israel can find gloomy ideas in the teachings of the Prophets. The noble men who kept alive in the hearts of Jewish exiles the sacred flame of devotion and love, have anything but melancholy views about life. They

look forward to the time when the streets of the restored city shall be full of boys and girls at play, and when the songs of young men and maidens shall be heard, yea, when the young men shall lead the virgins in the dances of a brighter and happier age. Theirs was not the religion of asceticism,—that belongs to a later age, and has its origin in other than Jewish influences.¹ Let the Bible be compared with other writings, whether ancient or modern, and it must be pronounced to be one of the most joyous of books. In one thing only do we find any exception to this ; in the older dispensation there was a gloom resting on death and the future life, which tinged with sadness one aspect of Jewish feeling. Yet even here the heroic faith of these clear-sighted, heaven-taught men manifested itself, and long before the full light of Revelation shone upon the graves of the dead, there were in their hearts, in their songs, and in their prayers, fore-gleams of immortality. In this region the Gentile world lived in a still deeper gloom and under shadows denser by much. Homer makes one of his heroes speak of the life of Hades as follows :

‘Name me not death with praiseful words, noble Ulysses ; I
Would sooner be a bonded serf, the labourer’s tool to ply,
To a small cottar on the heath with wealth exceeding small,
Than be the Lord of all the Shades in Pluto’s gloomy hall.’²

If we compare the tone of the whole book with the best literature of our own time, the difference must be apparent to every honest mind. In this age of science and civilization, an age so extolled by poets, and so lauded by Freethinkers, men, able and learned men, soberly ask in our leading reviews whether ‘life be worth living’ or not ! Cultivated men and women discuss whether suicide, after all, be not the best way of finding true happiness ! Our poetry is oftener a wail, a kind of funeral dirge, than a joyful celebration of the golden age. Hebrew bards could always sing, even of ‘judgment’ as well as

¹ Asceticism arose doubtless under the influence of the philosophy of Dualism ; this finds no favour in the Old Testament. The Jew is a Monotheist, whatever else he is ; moderns are at times startled by the vehemence with which he enforces some articles of his creed.

² Translation given by Professor Blackie.

mercy ; our poets wonder whether they can any longer speak of the Power behind all phenomena as a Person ! Bible psalmists call upon men and nations to rejoice even in darkest days : behind the clouds and the darkness was Jehovah ; He reigned, and justice and judgment were the basis of His administration. Some of the sweetest songs sung in these times have none of these notes of joy ;¹ they are wails of anguish, and the 'pathetic minor' appears too frequently in all our music. The very Church music is being changed by this prevailing tendency, and while our leaders are constantly reminding us that the Puritans were narrow and gloomy, they can hardly offer us soul-stirring strains like those sung, even on battlefields, by our sterner forefathers. Paul and Silas could sing praises when their feet were in the stocks,—even under the keenest sufferings they could speak and write joyfully of life and its issues ; a pure-minded man like the late Mr. Mill could only think life at best a 'poor thing,' and welcome the thought of annihilation with a sense of relief. Bible writers have none of these feelings of sadness ; they are full of joy, and they ever seek to inspire others with confidence. In the Apostolic age this tone of hope and joy is one of the most marked features. Men who lived in constant expectation of being used as torch-lights for the imperial gardens yet lived joyfully, and called upon others to rejoice. Fully to illustrate this feature of the New Testament would lead us too far out of our way ; the fact, however, is patent to the most cursory reader, and has been overlooked by no historian.² And whether we think of New or Old Testaments the tone is hopeful ; man is neither elevated into the position of a demi-god, nor is he degraded into a sort of fiend, by the writers. He has been made in the image of God, is God's child, even if a prodigal child, and therefore we must be

¹ Perowne, 'The Psalms,' vol. ii. p. 394, compares Ps. cxxvii. 3 with Tennyson's 'Lotos Eaters,' but he finds, even when the 'strain is not unlike,' a 'shadow of sadness and weariness on the words of the modern poet which finds no response in the spirit of the Hebrew bard.'

² See Lecky's 'History of European Morals ;' Pressensé's 'Early Years of Christianity,' vol. iv. ; also Professor Blackie's 'Four Phases of Morals,' etc.

hopeful about him. Truth has power to convert the soul, and the mind of man has been created for truth. The great Divine Man, the Lord of Man and King of the coming age, is not only all-powerful, but all-patient; He never fails, is never even discouraged, until He accomplishes His great work of salvation. Moreover, He shall yet see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and what satisfies His infinite heart, with its tender yearnings and loving purposes, may well satisfy frail, erring, short-sighted man. We submit that considerations like these ought to have weight with those who too rashly and without sufficient knowledge reject this record. The very healthiness of the tone of this literature is a sure note in its favour. Its 'words are half-battles,' its spirit high above that of all other literatures; morally and spiritually as much above the highest outside of itself, as the purest lyrics of Longfellow and Mrs. Browning are above the lowest sensational poetry and prose of our age.

And the effect of this book upon all who love and live in its spirit is most elevating. We can only hint at this aspect of our subject; the English Bible has not only been a standard of pure language and racy speech, it has also been, to those who have loved it, a daily inspiration towards goodness and truth. Some of the saintliest men and women have attributed all that they were to its enlightening, sanctifying power; its words have been to them words of eternal life. The teachers and leaders who have done most to instruct and to guide mankind, who have been the truest friends of liberty and the deadliest foes of every kind of tyranny, have drunk deeply at this fountain. 'The influence of the whole Bible has been throughout modern history a felt-power on the side of the weak and the oppressed, and in defence of liberty of conscience and the Divine sacredness of every human soul. *Men must hide the Bible from the people if they would steal now the liberties of men.*' The truth of this will be illustrated and confirmed by the widest survey of the influence of the Bible, and of Bible ideas, upon both individuals and nations: wherever men cordially embrace the truth of Scripture, wherever they reverence

its authority and follow its guidance, they become better men in the family, in the city, and in the State. The distinguished economist, M. de Laveleye, in his instructive study of 'Protestantism and Catholicism in their bearing upon the liberty and prosperity of nations,' attributes to the Reformation the best results of modern civilization. We know that one of the chief results of this great movement was to put the Bible into the hands of the people, to remove artificial barriers between the human mind and its soul-saving truth. In these remarks we are dealing with the external rather than internal evidences of the unique character of this Book ; but surely even Scepticism itself must see that some of the noblest assertions of liberty as against tyranny, whether over the conscience or in the State, came from men whose chief inspiration was this Book ! Much has been said, and not altogether without reason, about the gloomier side of Puritanism ; along with this we ought to remember what splendid work the great Puritan leaders did for civil and religious liberty. Perhaps they lived too much in the sterner life of the Old Dispensation ; perhaps they did give too little place to some of the most distinctive virtues of Christianity. Still we must give them credit for some of the best and most abiding elements in modern civilization. The 'Disciples of Calvin,' remarks Laveleye, 'were the civilizers of Scotland ;' wherever Bible truth is accepted, wherever the Holy Records are loved, we find industry and sturdy independence, along with respect for authority. Bible-taught men do not much reverence either kingcraft or priestcraft ; they do reverence and respect all lawful authority, whether in Church or State. And, strange as this must appear to Scepticism, a Book that teaches the depravity of the race, yet inspires us with strongest faith in the possibility of man's salvation ; the Book that gives the most awful views about the character of sin, gives also the grandest hopes for the future of mankind,—gives man power to live a truly noble life, and inspires him to work for others. Until Scepticism, on its own principles, can explain and account for these strange contrasts, it ought cer-

tainly to speak with greater reverence and more tenderness about the Bible.¹

There are many other features in connection with this literature well worthy of study,—characteristics, so to say, that, even from an outside point of view, are sufficiently remarkable, and which have never been fairly and boldly dealt with by Sceptics. Into these we cannot at present enter at greater length; enough has, we hope, been said to show that this book deserves more study from Sceptics than it has yet received. A book loved and honoured by some of the noblest thinkers the world has ever seen, full of biography in which there are no traces of hero-worship, the transparent truthfulness of whose writers every candid mind must own; a book that uniformly exalts God, and teaches man to be humble and seek his greatness in the service of the Supreme Good,—whose tone, both intellectually and morally, is so pure and healthy, whose precepts elevate all who truly receive them, making them better men and women in every relationship of life in proportion as they give to these precepts a high place in their thought;—a book, or rather a literature, of such a character demands from an age like ours, which boasts of its enlightenment and its charity, a treatment very different from that hitherto given to it by Sceptics and Sceptical writers.

And until Sceptical thinkers cast aside their bias and mental prejudice, until they honestly and reverently search the Scriptures, they cannot expect those who know and feel that the words of this book are indeed spirit and life, to give them credit for absolute sincerity of purpose and disinterested desire to find and follow the truth. Carlyle here teaches the Sceptic a lesson. The sage has his own way of expressing reverence,

¹ The learned Dr. Döllinger thus writes: 'I believe we may credit one great superiority of England over other countries to the circumstance that there the Holy Scripture is found in every house, as is the case nowhere else in the world, and is, so to speak, the good genius of the place, the protecting spirit of the domestic hearth and family.'—'The Reunion of the Churches,' p. 128. Laveleye attributes the prosperity of Ulster, as contrasted with other parts of Ireland, to the same influence.—See his 'Protestantism and Catholicism.'

no doubt, yet who can doubt that he deeply revered this book? 'In the poorest cottage are books—is one book, wherein for several thousands of years the spirit of man has found light, and nourishment, and an interpreting response to what is deepest in him; wherein still, to this day, for the eye that will look well, the mystery of existence reflects itself, if not resolved, yet revealed, and prophetically emblemed; if not to the satisfying of the outward sense, *yet to the opening of the inward sense, which is the far grander result.*'¹ Sceptics are now eagerly studying, or at all events loudly extolling, the sacred writings of other religions, and the wisdom of heathen sages. By all means let them study the Koran,² and the sacred books of the East,—let them study the writings of Roman emperors, and the devout meditations of Stoic philosophers; but let them not despise, and let them not neglect, the one and only book which can spiritually enlighten man's inner nature, and be a lamp to the *whole* of his path, whether here or hereafter.

¹ 'Miscellaneous Essays,' vol. iii. p. 161.

² If their experience is like ours, they will find the Koran very difficult to read. Occasionally fine passages are to be found, but for the most part it is common-place enough.

CHAPTER XI.

SCEPTICISM AND THE BIBLE—(Continued).

‘Men must hide the Bible from the people, if they would steal now the liberties of men.’—NEWMAN SMYTH.

‘The Bible is not a book of science, dictated in technical and scholastic language, but a book of life, written for common and wayfaring persons, in the language of daily life, of national history, of popular apologue, and of glowing prophetic poetry.’—F. R. LEES.

‘Here also I will observe that the *manner* in which men read this same Bible is, like all else, proportionate to their stage of culture, to the circumstances of their environment.’—CARLYLE.

‘No outward Revelation can enlighten us spiritually while we resist the Divine Spirit within us.’—DR. J. MCLEOD CAMPBELL.

So far we have concerned ourselves with what may be termed the external characteristics of the Bible ; these are indeed very remarkable, and ought to be more considered by Sceptics than they have hitherto been. Nothing is easier than to find causes of offence in some portions of the Record. Even those who love the Bible, and who desire to use it as their guide in life, often find it hard to explain, as they would like, some of its earlier chapters. At the same time, the character of the Book is such that they gladly accept what they can understand, leaving to some brighter day the difficult passages. Scepticism having none of this love for and faith in the Record, stumbles on its very threshold, and not seldom refuses to give to the book anything like honest treatment. Moreover, he who would understand the Scriptures must go far more deeply into its inner meaning and spirit. Those who have studied it the most, who have used it as their daily companion and guide through the busy years of a long life, tell us that these exterior aspects,

however wonderful, give no true conception of what the book is, or of its real value to the human soul. Writers familiar both with this and with other kinds of literature, remind us that here there are ideas *peculiar to this record*, and the more familiar we are with its contents, the more we shall be able to appreciate this view of the case. It would not, indeed, be difficult to bring from other sources ideas and expressions that resemble the thoughts of Moses, or the words even of Christ. In our day, much has been made of some of these similarities, but the profoundest students of the book assure us that they are very superficial. 'Not only are the fundamental ideas in Christian Revelation independent of Pagan influences . . . the whole attitude of thought in the one is unlike that in the other. . . . As a record, however, of a true and genuine revelation, it is a light shining in a dark place.' This estimate is from one who would be far from unwilling to find outside of this book some of its essential truths, and therefore all the more worthy of acceptance. Fully to deal with this question would lead us away from our immediate object, but a simple illustration may be given. Dr. Conder finds in the Bible six lines of thought opened up, quite distinct from anything seen elsewhere. The idea of Divine law given in this record stands 'absolutely alone;' so, too, the Biblical conception of sin. No one familiar with the thoughts of men outside Divine Revelation, can doubt that the teachings about this awful subject are distinctive. The views of sin are both simpler and profounder than those met with in the moral writers of the heathen world. Holiness, too, a co-related idea, appears in a new light in the Word of God; 'what in other systems is taken for the substance and essence of holiness appears here as the mere wrap-page of a moral conception.' Love and faith, though very simple elements, appear in new light. 'When St. John wrote that "he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love . . . and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," he employed a word which to Plato's ear would have been barbarous. Whether Plato would have welcomed this declaration as a revelation or derided it as an absurdity may be questioned,

but it is certain he would not have recognised it as a familiar thought.' Lastly, the idea expressed by the word 'heaven' is both sublime and distinctive.¹ There are, perhaps, other Biblical ideas equally suggestive; even when this book deals with truth apparently familiar to us, it sets it forth in such a way as to make it essentially new. Let anyone compare the Christian ideal of brotherhood with that of Stoicism, from which some declare it was borrowed, and he will see that there is a wide difference. Lange,² a man not prejudiced in favour of Christianity, speaks of 'its wonderfully fascinating doctrine of the kingdom which is not of this world;' again, he declares that 'Christianity, by preaching the Gospel to the poor, unhinged the ancient world.' If any honest Sceptic doubts whether these things are so, let him go to Lecky's 'History of Morals,' or to 'Ecce Homo,' and he will find ample confirmation. Rightly to understand and fully to appreciate Bible teaching, however, the Sceptic must see and judge for himself. Let him search the Scriptures, and see whether they do not contain words of eternal life. No one can feel the power of this book who studies it simply from an exterior point of view. External characteristics may awaken interest, may even produce, have often produced, an impression favourable to the record; because this is so, we have directed attention to some of them. After all, the Bible is never truly known until it is seen in its own inner light,—until the reader, abandoning all prejudice and all prepossession, comes to the record determined to seek and to find its secret.

The only hope for Scepticism is in connection with this deeper study of the Bible. No book can so little bear a mere surface reading. To the superficial reader, and to the unsympathetic nature, there must be many stones of stumbling and rocks of offence. Some one has said it is a book in which 'each one *seeks* and *finds* his own opinions,' and there is too much truth in the representation. The very nature of the record, its historical character, its relations at so many points with ideas and institutions not its own, makes it difficult to the

¹ See Conder's 'Basis of Faith.'

² 'History of Materialism.'

cursorily and fault-seeking reader. And yet how many troubled seekers have here found the pearl of great price ! Many of the leading Reformers, both at home and on the Continent, owed their conversion and enlightenment to the simple reading of the Bible. The entrance of its words gave them light, and made them wise unto salvation, wise also to win others to the path of life. There is, in connection with English history, an interesting story of a nobleman who began the study of the Acts of the Apostles, with the determination that he would explain away one of the grandest events there recorded,—the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. As he studied the record of the change wrought on Saul, he became convinced that St. Paul himself gives the only satisfactory explanation. Thus the seeker found here, what he did not expect, a new light upon his own path of life, and a proof of the truth of Christianity too convincing to be rejected. Instances are constantly occurring of the same kind ; the record has still power to make the simple wise, and if only all honest Sceptics could be induced earnestly and honestly to search for themselves, willing to find and to *follow* the truth, we believe many would experience the same change wrought upon Lord Lyttleton ; hence our anxiety that they should throw aside their bias, and really examine this wonderful book.

It is to be feared that popular views of the nature of the Bible, and popular methods of reading its pages, tend but little to help doubters in their search after the truth. When complaints are made against mere Bible-worship, many devout Christians take offence, and yet these complaints are not altogether unreasonable. As Dr. Saphir well says, 'The Bible may be the Protestant crucifix.'¹ We may *believe in the Bible instead of in the Christ whom it sets forth* ; we may reverence the form, while almost despising the living substance. So may we make an idol of the book, reverencing the symbol instead of seeking to understand its meaning, and through it to reach the truth taught. The Sceptic sees the Christian deal with his Bible in a semi-magical way, picking out his favourite texts, putting them

¹ See Saphir's 'Christ and the Scriptures.'

together in a sort of haphazard fashion, ignoring the context and the surroundings, and then calling the conception so gathered God's revealed will.¹ Following too slavishly and too closely the same method, the Sceptic selects *his* texts and marshals his arguments, gathering from the Bible what makes against the Bible teaching, and thus the grandest of all books is made to utter words anything but sublime and soul-inspiring. Unquestionably, *we* are responsible for much of modern Scepticism about the Bible. Our habitual, and perhaps at times judicious, skipping over of large tracts of its territory, our allegorical and figurative interpretations of many parts of the record, our perverse habit of merely *applying* instead of *interpreting* its teachings, and our devout uses of parts which it is our boast that we do not understand, must often perplex honest minds. We are, at times, reminded that by such modes of interpretation any book may be made to mean anything or nothing, but that no definite and universally applicable sense can be found. Looking at this 'Bible-reading' of ours from one stand-point, we may well wonder that so little mischief has been done; still the truth must be told, and this truth is that, not the 'newer critics,' but our uncritical reading of Scripture, must be held responsible for much of popular Scepticism.

Of course, there is a devotional reading of the Bible which is in no wise open to such criticism. 'The real fruit of such Bible reading lies less in any addition to one's store of systematic knowledge, than in the privilege of withdrawing for a moment from the thoughts and cares of the world, to enter into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the God of love and redemption reveals Himself to the heart, and where the simplest believer can place himself by the side of the Psalmist, the Prophet, and the Apostle in that inner sanctuary where no sound is heard but the gracious accents of divine promise and the secret response of assured and humble faith.' Such a reading of the Bible is above all criticism, and in its presence our

¹ If Christians would read carefully what Mr. Müller, of Bristol, an authority on this subject, says on Bible reading in his 'Counsel to Christians,' chap. ii., they might receive help, and be less of a stumbling-block to Sceptics.

best attitude is the Psalmist's prayer, 'Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.'¹ What we refer to is not the private reading, but the open use, of Scripture in such a way as to hinder the true understanding thereof. So far as some good people are concerned, there might be no historical element at all in the Bible. They read and speak of the whole or of any part, whether Genesis, Ezekiel, the Song of Solomon, or St. John's Epistles, whether the burning eloquence and winged words of inspired Prophets, or the visions of the Seer of Patmos, as if it were directly and immediately related to their life, and to this alone. To them Old and New is the same; the beggarly elements and the completed results of Divine knowledge all appear on the same level. The hope of the Resurrection is to them as bright and clear in the Book of Job, as in St. Paul's first letter to the Church at Corinth; the light of life shines to them as clearly on Jacob's strange path, as it did upon St. Paul, when he heard words he dared not utter, and saw sights he could not describe. To them Jew and Gentile are the same, and whenever they find the word 'Zion,' they substitute for it the particular Church to which they belong; whenever they listen to any promise made to Israel, no matter in what connection, they accept it as addressed to themselves; they do this, too, with quiet assurance and sublime unconsciousness of any defect in their system of interpreting the oracles of God. Such a method of reading and explaining the Word must be a stumblingblock to the Sceptic, and hence our contention that, in part at least, Christians are to blame for the Sceptic's neglect and misuse of the Bible.

Suppose the Sceptic could be induced to consider carefully and study honestly this wonderful book, so often neglected by its foes, so often misread by its friends,—are there methods of study fitted to help an honest and earnest reader? Without pretending to lay down rules for the guidance of others in a matter like this, where each must

¹ See in Dr. Saphir's 'Christ and the Scriptures,' chap. vii. some important remarks on the 'Study of the Bible;' also 'Diary and Letters of Henry Craik' (late co-pastor with Mr. Muller, of Bristol).

see for himself and herself, we may be permitted to suggest a few considerations to those who are less familiar than ourselves with this subject. There are conditions, both *subjective* and *objective*, that have much to do with our relation to Holy Scripture. True it is, and this cannot be too much emphasized, that no one need ever hope to understand the Scriptures who has not Christ as the key. 'Whatever the Word is,' says Saphir, 'it is *because of its relation to Christ.*' As St. Paul, a master in this science, tells his son Timothy, the Holy Scriptures make wise unto salvation, *but only through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.* This key no Sceptic ever can, while a Sceptic, possess, and therefore some of the most distinctive teachings of the Book will be hid from his eyes. But even for the Sceptic, there is possible a reading or searching that may lead to Christ, and hence the importance of conforming to its conditions; given only certain convictions about the book itself, given also certain states of mind, and the honest doubter may be expected to find truth of which he may now be all unconscious. Some one reminds us that Nature does not proclaim aloud her secrets, she only whispers them in the ear of the earnest listener; this thought has its application to the mysteries of the sacred record. If this volume be what Christians say it is, if it be a veritable record of Divine Revelation to man, may we not expect its secrets to reveal themselves only to those who are prepared to understand, and willing to follow, its voice? As one remarks: 'The Bible contents are pre-eminently something of a quickening force, and only apprehensible by a life corresponding to the teaching given;' hence, as the interpreter of nature needs an open ear and an unbiased mind, so the reader of Scripture needs an obedient mind and a child-like heart. Professor Jevons gives, in his 'Principles of Science,' a very interesting chapter on the 'Character of the Experimentalist.' It is at all times a difficult task to tell wherein the great strength of a discoverer lies; in seeking for this we may often mistake and put the incidental for what is essential. There may, indeed, be no supreme faculty, so to speak; the greatness may consist in a

certain balance of all the faculties, or in a kind of intuitive power, which cannot be explained by any inductive process. Comparing such giants of discovery and research as Kepler, Newton, and Faraday, Jevons finds in them elements of character that are very unlike. He thinks that 'in all probability the errors of the great mind far exceed in number those of the less vigorous one.' He also reminds us, that although Newton is often cited as one who did not form hypotheses, the very opposite of this is the actual fact, and that the great man is ever making, and also ever abandoning, hypotheses. 'Fertility of imagination and abundance of guesses at truth are among the first requisites of discovery.' It would almost appear as if in the mind of a great discoverer opposite qualities must be combined. 'The philosopher,' says Faraday, no mean authority in such a case, 'should be a man willing to listen to every suggestion, but determined to judge for himself. He should not be biased by appearances; have no favourite hypothesis, be of no school, and in doctrine have no master. He should not be a respecter of persons, but of things. Truth should be his primary object. If to these qualities be added industry, he may indeed hope to walk within the veil of the temple of Nature.'¹

We shall not greatly err if we apply all this to the student of Scripture, and if we demand the same qualities, alike of head and heart, indicated by Jevons and Faraday. Looking at the *subjective* side of this question, we may with confidence affirm, that no one will ever understand the Bible who does not come to it with unbiased mind; the nature that would receive its communications must be free from bias and from prejudice. If we come seeking our own opinions, determined to find these, and unwilling to find or to follow any other, then in all probability the Bible will confirm us in old errors, and supply material for new ones. Nor is the Sceptical bias, of which we have already spoken, the only hindrance in this region. The man who honestly loves the Bible, and believes that he is willing to follow where it leads, may come to its pages so

¹ 'Principles of Science,' vol. ii. p. 240.

biased by certain dogmas, or ecclesiastical prepossessions, that he is utterly incapable of seeing what is written. There are good people who profess to find some of the deepest teachings of Christianity in the wars of Joshua, the Song of Solomon, or the Book of Ruth, and who seem to think that *distinctively Gospel ideas* may easily be found in the earliest pages of the record. So, too, there are no doubt thinkers who firmly believe that the Holy Spirit ceased to lead the mind of the believer into truth after the age of the Reformation, and who insist on fitting all truth into moulds prepared by Luther, Calvin, and the noble leaders of the spiritual Revolution. They cite Pastor Robinson's remark about God having more truth to reveal to man in connection with the study of His Word, but they refuse to give room for its practical application to modern thought. Others may advance a step further, but close their dispensation of illumination with the age of Wesley and the leaders of the Evangelical Revival period. All these, and all such prepossessions, are fatal to the true understanding of the Bible. As Faraday says, the philosopher (and we may say the Bible-student) must have in doctrine 'no master,' must be no 'respector of persons, but of things;' and the 'things' here are Scripture teachings.

Specially, however, does all this apply to the beliefs, prejudices, and prepossessions of Scepticism. It may be said of the beliefs to which we have referred, that they belonged to men who were all *mighty in the Scriptures*; not that any men, however great, or any class of men, however honoured, should be allowed to come between the mind and God's Revelation. To be seen aright, this must ever be seen in its own light, and by the open eye of each individual seeker; but a modest man may be allowed to think that these, and such-like, leaders of faith are quite as likely as himself to be right in their findings.

On the other hand, the Sceptic comes to the study of the record with prejudices that must effectually shut out its light from his soul. How can the man who thinks this book a priestly invention, the outcome of superstition, and the instrument of tyranny, really listen to its teachings? How can a

reader who believes that Moses and the Prophets were impostors, patiently and honestly weigh their words? How can one who thinks St. Paul a mere enthusiast, give to his teaching that calm and reverent consideration necessary to a proper understanding of the same? *Hence the absolute necessity of an honest and truth-loving mind* on the part of the seeker after this knowledge. We have already referred to the blinding influence of prejudice in connection with political judgments and public life; this operates in such a way on private judgment, that no one can pay any serious attention to estimates of character whose origin is at all suspected of partizanship. How can the man, who has a fixed idea in his mind that Mr. Gladstone is a Jesuit in disguise, or that he is a mere self-seeking, place-holding politician, read with open mind any of the most important utterances of the great statesman? How can any one who believes Lord Beaconsfield to have been a mere charlatan, and to have made use of men and opportunities simply to advance himself, do justice to any of his speeches or acts? There must be in our minds, if not full sympathy, at any rate the absence of antipathy and actual distrust, before we can judge aright, and on their merits, the utterances or the policy of any public man. In like manner, the Sceptic who would understand this book must gather his estimate of its character from its own pages, and not from what its worst foes have told him. As the man of science listens for the faintest whisper of Nature's voice, as he willingly abandons his pet theories and favourite hypotheses when he finds them at variance with facts, so must the Bible student come to this book seeking simply to know, and that from itself alone, what are its distinctive teachings.

Another condition must be fulfilled: *he who would really understand this record must be willing to obey the truth revealed to him.* There may be a love of truth, which is, so to speak,

¹ Professor Huxley, in his 'Hume,' p. 13, well says, with reference to some opinions of the historian, 'that whatever other changes may have taken place (in this country), political warfare remains *in statu quo*.' Those who have followed the political discussions of the last six years will say Amen to this.

purely intellectual, and which is quite consistent with much that is morally unworthy in feeling and life. The love of truth here demanded is that practical affection which leads us to obey what we know, and all we know, and which leads us *to seek the knowledge in order to render the obedience*. Even in connection with the study of Nature, truth known and not followed would soon lead to perversions fatal to further discovery. If the explorer did not resolve to abandon every hypothesis at the bidding of fact, and to follow obediently wherever truth might lead him, his ear would not long remain attentive, and Nature would soon cease to communicate to him her secrets. In Bible-study this condition is essential, and the lack of this willingness to obey the truth is the very rock on which so many readers make shipwreck. If we come to the record only to find confirmation of opinions already held, or to find proofs of the presence of what we have resolved to find there, we shall be sure to miss the way. The narrow-minded ecclesiastic comes seeking proofs of some favourite theory, and in the most impossible places he finds them plain and convincing; the Sceptic expects to find stumbling-blocks, and there they lie on the very threshold of the book. Herschell declares that the temple of astronomy is open only to those who come with a sound and sufficient knowledge of mathematics; those who are not willing, or who are by nature unable to pay this price, are excluded from the privileges of its votaries. They may think the conditions hard or easy, as the case may be; there they are, and all who would obtain the privileges must conform to them. So for the Bible reader there are subjective conditions that are essential, but they are not such as to exclude any who deserve to enter this sanctuary. They are not so much intellectual as moral and spiritual, possible to all who desire to know in order that they may do the right. Idle curiosity may have its place, and mere intellectual appreciation of truth its power; the Bible, like the great Being whose Name it reveals to us, opens up its hidden treasures, and unfolds its mysteries, only to the humble and contrite in heart.

There are also what may be termed *objective* conditions to be complied with by those who would understand this 'unique

insure that neither law should the mind of the reader, no matter how willing—no matter how ready he may be to follow truth revealed in that there may be other hindrances in his path to be removed before he is in a position to study this book. In studying a great work of art—say a painting—we must not only have an open eye for beauty, a heart willing to sympathize with the artist, we must also occupy a proper position in relation to the picture we are studying. So must the Bible be seen in its own light, and the standpoint of the observer must be wisely chosen. Here again the Sceptic holds opinions and prepossessions that are fatal to his reading.

There must be due acknowledgment of the *historical character of the Bible*. In these days of evolution theories, when the historical method is applied to every kind of study, and when even *gent* thinkers believe they have satisfied all reasonable demands when they have explained the origin and history of anything, it is not creditable to us that we should so completely ignore the historical element in the Bible. Here the average Sceptic is almost more at fault than anywhere else. Listen to the arguments of Sceptical lecturers, to debates on the Bible, and perhaps it is not too much to say that eight out of ten of the most powerful popular objections are based on this form of misconception. For anything that these disputants state to the contrary, we might even reverse the order of the books, placing the Book of Isaiah at the beginning, and the Acts of the Apostles in the middle of the Old Testament, instead of after the records of what Christ *began* to accomplish when on earth. We are bound to admit that Sceptics are not alone to blame for this neglect of history. Ordinary Christians 'prove' from Scripture certain doctrines in a way not at all calculated to help inquiring minds. We have already hinted at this. Not only the darkest side of human nature and life, but the brightest truths of the Christian Revelation, are supposed to have been fully known to patriarchs, soldiers, and princes in early days. The Messianic hope is supposed to be as clear in the Book of Genesis as in the closing chapters of Isaiah, and the founders of the Jewish state are held to have been as well instructed as

were the Apostles of Jesus Christ. Only evil can result from such a view of the sacred records, and in connection with certain aspects of Scepticism we see glimpses of the mischief done. The Sceptical attitude towards the patriarchs, and towards what is termed the morality of the Old Testament, might be considerably modified were the historical character of the book more fully recognised. They ask us, 'Is this the will of God?' when they meet with acts that are base, and with ideas that are less advanced than those found in the teachings of Christ! We must remind the honest reader of the Bible, that this book is not so much God's Revelation as its *record*; that the germs of truth found in its earlier parts, especially, have and must have their historical settings; that the vision, at first dim, shadowy, and indistinct, grew brighter and brighter as men advanced nearer the perfect day of the New Dispensation; and hence that we must view the record as a progressive one, its earlier portions as rudimentary and incomplete, adapted often to a state of mind and life in which God had, and could have, no delight. As one says: 'If we are not to do despite to the Spirit's chosen historical method of Revelation, we must read every Scripture in its own light, and interpret it in view of its surroundings, and in its place in the gradual development of the Bible. The historical process of Revelation must be brought to the forefront, if we would see justice done to the Bible.' In this direction must the honest Sceptic seek relief from some of his doubts and difficulties about the *morality* of the Old Testament. Unless we are to play fast and loose with the moral sense, and to believe that there are different moral standards arbitrarily appointed by the mere will of the Revealer, and right because so appointed, we must apply the historical method. We must take what Christ says in relation to parts of the Mosaic code, about the 'hardness' of the people's hearts, and see in the Old Testament history illustrations of Divine adaptation, not of the perfected will of God; see also the gradual development through an educational process, divinely carried out, of a higher moral sense and a purer ethical standard. So viewing the record, we shall not so readily stumble at acts here and

there, anything but morally perfect. Not that by this method we are likely to get rid of all the difficulties in the problem of Revelation, many may remain unresolved, confronting the reader at times as with an aspect and air of defiance, but others will disappear, and the candid reader will be able to regard God's Revelation, less in the light of words here and there uttered, finished words, to which nothing may be added and from which nothing is to be taken, and more as an 'inspired course of history,' guided, controlled, and directed towards the fulness of the times, when One was to appear who should fully embody and express its Divine meaning. If the inquirer studies the Bible from this point of view, the isolated words and acts of this or that individual will cease to have their old importance; in a very good sense the 'individual withers,' and the 'race' becomes more and more important. And the 'individuals' who thus lose prominence will be the very men whose vices have occasioned so much trouble to Sceptics, and the 'race,' that gains in value will be the 'people of God,' who occupy so peculiar a place in the record, and whose long history is God's Revelation to the world. Not only Sceptics but too often Christians also ignore this chosen people. They read the Bible with minds steeped in the thought, that the chief function of Revelation is to convey to man's mind truths otherwise unknown and unknowable; hence they are apt to overlook Jehovah's servant Israel, and to read the record as if there were *in the history of redemption* 'no difference' between Jew and Gentile. But when we ignore thus the 'People of the Book' and their strange history, we cannot hope to understand the record itself. 'If the religion of the Bible can be shown to have run a different course' (different, that is, from the religions outside Christianity), 'if it can be shown that in it truth once attained is never lost, and never thrust aside so as to lose its influence, but that in spite of all impediments the knowledge of God given to Israel moved steadily forward, till at last it emancipated itself from national restrictions, and without changing its consistency or denying its former history, merged in the perfect religion of Christ, which still satisfies the deepest needs of mankind, then

I apprehend the distinctive claims of the Bible, and the religion of the Bible, are set on a broad and safe basis, and the Revelation of the Old and New Testament may fairly claim to be the Revelation of God to men in a special and absolute sense.¹ Much more than this may be honestly claimed, because much more than this is true ; but this view of the case (even as thus understated), so often overlooked by Sceptical readers, overlooked even by believers themselves, is both true and important. As one has it, 'We must be robbed of faith in the divineness of the whole history of Israel before our Bibles can cease to be sacred to us ;' but if once we believe in Israel as preparing the way for Christ, we shall soon come to believe in the true 'Servant of Jehovah.' Not only, then, must there be account taken of the historical character of the book, but we must do justice to the peculiar connection of Israel with this history, if we would rightly read this strange literature, and fully know the truth it teaches. When we do this honestly, and with desire simply to know in order to follow truth, we shall find 'within the natural signs of a supernatural evolution. A Divine life is in the world, working through history, and in a special and altogether unique manner in Israel, for far-off ends.'²

Further, the Sceptic must *read the whole book* if he is ever to reach its real meaning. Here, much of our popular 'searching of Scripture' fails ; the Bible is dealt with too much as a Book of Texts, and not enough as an organic whole. If the whole record were constructed on the principle of some of the Psalms, or the Book of Proverbs, such a method of study might be profitable, but if the book be what we have assumed, one complete and harmonious whole, such a fragmentary searching can never lead to high results. Take the Bible reading of popular lecturers in Secular Halls, where some clever Sceptic 'shows up,' so to speak, the worthlessness of the book. The citations are made on no consistent principle ; the chronology is utterly ignored, and the whole treated as if its pages were not even numbered. A writer is made to contradict himself by judicious leaving out of some portions of his

¹ Dr. W. R. Smith, 'The Prophets of Israel,' p. 14.

² Smyth.

there, anything but morally perfect. Not that by this method we are likely to get rid of all the difficulties in the problem of Revelation, many may remain unresolved, confronting the reader at times as with an aspect and air of defiance, but others will disappear, and the candid reader will be able to regard God's Revelation, less in the light of words here and there uttered, finished words, to which nothing may be added and from which nothing is to be taken, and more as an 'inspired course of history,' guided, controlled, and directed towards the fulness of the times, when One was to appear who should fully embody and express its Divine meaning. If the inquirer studies the Bible from this point of view, the isolated words and acts of this or that individual will cease to have their old importance; in a very good sense the 'individual withers,' and the 'race' becomes more and more important. And the 'individuals' who thus lose prominence will be the very men whose vices have occasioned so much trouble to Sceptics, and the 'race, that gains in value will be the 'people of God,' who occupy so peculiar a place in the record, and whose long history is God's Revelation to the world. Not only Sceptics but too often Christians also ignore this chosen people. They read the Bible with minds steeped in the thought, that the chief function of Revelation is to convey to man's mind truths otherwise unknown and unknowable; hence they are apt to overlook Jehovah's servant Israel, and to read the record as if there were *in the history of redemption* 'no difference' between Jew and Gentile. But when we ignore thus the 'People of the Book' and their strange history, we cannot hope to understand the record itself. 'If the religion of the Bible can be shown to have run a different course' (different, that is, from the religions outside Christianity), 'if it can be shown that in it truth once attained is never lost, and never thrust aside so as to lose its influence, but that in spite of all impediments the knowledge of God given to Israel moved steadily forward, till at last it emancipated itself from national restrictions, and without changing its consistency or denying its former history, merged in the perfect religion of Christ, which still satisfies the deepest needs of mankind, then

I apprehend the distinctive claims of the Bible, and the religion of the Bible, are set on a broad and safe basis, and the Revelation of the Old and New Testament may fairly claim to be the Revelation of God to men in a special and absolute sense.¹ Much more than this may be honestly claimed, because much more than this is true ; but this view of the case (even as thus understated), so often overlooked by Sceptical readers, overlooked even by believers themselves, is both true and important. As one has it, 'We must be robbed of faith in the divineness of the whole history of Israel before our Bibles can cease to be sacred to us ;' but if once we believe in Israel as preparing the way for Christ, we shall soon come to believe in the true 'Servant of Jehovah.' Not only, then, must there be account taken of the historical character of the book, but we must do justice to the peculiar connection of Israel with this history, if we would rightly read this strange literature, and fully know the truth it teaches. When we do this honestly, and with desire simply to know in order to follow truth, we shall find 'within the natural signs of a supernatural evolution. A Divine life is in the world, working through history, and in a special and altogether unique manner in Israel, for far-off ends.'²

Further, the Sceptic must *read the whole book* if he is ever to reach its real meaning. Here, much of our popular 'searching of Scripture' fails ; the Bible is dealt with too much as a Book of Texts, and not enough as an organic whole. If the whole record were constructed on the principle of some of the Psalms, or the Book of Proverbs, such a method of study might be profitable, but if the book be what we have assumed, one complete and harmonious whole, such a fragmentary searching can never lead to high results. Take the Bible reading of popular lecturers in Secular Halls, where some clever Sceptic 'shows up,' so to speak, the worthlessness of the book. The citations are made on no consistent principle ; the chronology is utterly ignored, and the whole treated as if its pages were not even numbered. A writer is made to contradict himself by judicious leaving out of some portions of his

¹ Dr. W. R. Smith, 'The Prophets of Israel,' p. 14.

² Smyth.

there, anything but morally perfect. Not that by this method we are likely to get rid of all the difficulties in the problem of Revelation, many may remain unresolved, confronting the reader at times as with an aspect and air of defiance, but others will disappear, and the candid reader will be able to regard God's Revelation, less in the light of words here and there uttered, finished words, to which nothing may be added and from which nothing is to be taken, and more as an 'inspired course of history,' guided, controlled, and directed towards the fulness of the times, when One was to appear who should fully embody and express its Divine meaning. If the inquirer studies the Bible from this point of view, the isolated words and acts of this or that individual will cease to have their old importance; in a very good sense the 'individual withers,' and the 'race' becomes more and more important. And the 'individuals' who thus lose prominence will be the very men whose vices have occasioned so much trouble to Sceptics, and the 'race, that gains in value will be the 'people of God,' who occupy so peculiar a place in the record, and whose long history is God's Revelation to the world. Not only Sceptics but too often Christians also ignore this chosen people. They read the Bible with minds steeped in the thought, that the chief function of Revelation is to convey to man's mind truths otherwise unknown and unknowable; hence they are apt to overlook Jehovah's servant Israel, and to read the record as if there were *in the history of redemption* 'no difference' between Jew and Gentile. But when we ignore thus the 'People of the Book' and their strange history, we cannot hope to understand the record itself. 'If the religion of the Bible can be shown to have run a different course' (different, that is, from the religions outside Christianity), 'if it can be shown that in it truth once attained is never lost, and never thrust aside so as to lose its influence, but that in spite of all impediments the knowledge of God given to Israel moved steadily forward, till at last it emancipated itself from national restrictions, and without changing its consistency or denying its former history, merged in the perfect religion of Christ, which still satisfies the deepest needs of mankind, then

I apprehend the distinctive claims of the Bible, and the religion of the Bible, are set on a broad and safe basis, and the Revelation of the Old and New Testament may fairly claim to be the Revelation of God to men in a special and absolute sense.¹ Much more than this may be honestly claimed, because much more than this is true; but this view of the case (even as thus understated), so often overlooked by Sceptical readers, overlooked even by believers themselves, is both true and important. As one has it, 'We must be robbed of faith in the divineness of the whole history of Israel before our Bibles can cease to be sacred to us;' but if once we believe in Israel as preparing the way for Christ, we shall soon come to believe in the true 'Servant of Jehovah.' Not only, then, must there be account taken of the historical character of the book, but we must do justice to the peculiar connection of Israel with this history, if we would rightly read this strange literature, and fully know the truth it teaches. When we do this honestly, and with desire simply to know in order to follow truth, we shall find 'within the natural signs of a supernatural evolution. A Divine life is in the world, working through history, and in a special and altogether unique manner in Israel, for far-off ends.'²

Further, the Sceptic must *read the whole book* if he is ever to reach its real meaning. Here, much of our popular 'searching of Scripture' fails; the Bible is dealt with too much as a Book of Texts, and not enough as an organic whole. If the whole record were constructed on the principle of some of the Psalms, or the Book of Proverbs, such a method of study might be profitable, but if the book be what we have assumed, one complete and harmonious whole, such a fragmentary searching can never lead to high results. Take the Bible reading of popular lecturers in Secular Halls, where some clever Sceptic 'shows up,' so to speak, the worthlessness of the book. The citations are made on no consistent principle; the chronology is utterly ignored, and the whole treated as if its pages were not even numbered. A writer is made to contradict himself by judicious leaving out of some portions of his

¹ Dr. W. R. Smith, 'The Prophets of Israel,' p. 14.

² Smyth.

there, anything but morally perfect. Not that by this method we are likely to get rid of all the difficulties in the problem of Revelation, many may remain unresolved, confronting the reader at times as with an aspect and air of defiance, but others will disappear, and the candid reader will be able to regard God's Revelation, less in the light of words here and there uttered, finished words, to which nothing may be added and from which nothing is to be taken, and more as an 'inspired course of history,' guided, controlled, and directed towards the fulness of the times, when One was to appear who should fully embody and express its Divine meaning. If the inquirer studies the Bible from this point of view, the isolated words and acts of this or that individual will cease to have their old importance; in a very good sense the 'individual withers,' and the 'race' becomes more and more important. And the 'individuals' who thus lose prominence will be the very men whose vices have occasioned so much trouble to Sceptics, and the 'race, that gains in value will be the 'people of God,' who occupy so peculiar a place in the record, and whose long history is God's Revelation to the world. Not only Sceptics but too often Christians also ignore this chosen people. They read the Bible with minds steeped in the thought, that the chief function of Revelation is to convey to man's mind truths otherwise unknown and unknowable; hence they are apt to overlook Jehovah's servant Israel, and to read the record as if there were *in the history of redemption* 'no difference' between Jew and Gentile. But when we ignore thus the 'People of the Book' and their strange history, we cannot hope to understand the record itself. 'If the religion of the Bible can be shown to have run a different course' (different, that is, from the religions outside Christianity), 'if it can be shown that in it truth once attained is never lost, and never thrust aside so as to lose its influence, but that in spite of all impediments the knowledge of God given to Israel moved steadily forward, till at last it emancipated itself from national restrictions, and without changing its consistency or denying its former history, merged in the perfect religion of Christ, which still satisfies the deepest needs of mankind, then


I apprehend the distinctive claims of the Bible, and the religion of the Bible, are set on a broad and safe basis, and the Revelation of the Old and New Testament may fairly claim to be the Revelation of God to men in a special and absolute sense.¹ Much more than this may be honestly claimed, because much more than this is true; but this view of the case (even as thus understated), so often overlooked by Sceptical readers, overlooked even by believers themselves, is both true and important. As one has it, 'We must be robbed of faith in the divineness of the whole history of Israel before our Bibles can cease to be sacred to us;' but if once we believe in Israel as preparing the way for Christ, we shall soon come to believe in the true 'Servant of Jehovah.' Not only, then, must there be account taken of the historical character of the book, but we must do justice to the peculiar connection of Israel with this history, if we would rightly read this strange literature, and fully know the truth it teaches. When we do this honestly, and with desire simply to know in order to follow truth, we shall find 'within the natural signs of a supernatural evolution. A Divine life is in the world, working through history, and in a special and altogether unique manner in Israel, for far-off ends.'²

Further, the Sceptic must *read the whole book* if he is ever to reach its real meaning. Here, much of our popular 'searching of Scripture' fails; the Bible is dealt with too much as a Book of Texts, and not enough as an organic whole. If the whole record were constructed on the principle of some of the Psalms, or the Book of Proverbs, such a method of study might be profitable, but if the book be what we have assumed, one complete and harmonious whole, such a fragmentary searching can never lead to high results. Take the Bible reading of popular lecturers in Secular Halls, where some clever Sceptic 'shows up,' so to speak, the worthlessness of the book. The citations are made on no consistent principle; the chronology is utterly ignored, and the whole treated as if its pages were not even numbered. A writer is made to contradict himself by judicious leaving out of some portions of his

¹ Dr. W. R. Smith, 'The Prophets of Israel,' p. 14.

² Smyth.

words. Thus, in order to show that the New Testament teaching is contradictory, St. Paul is made to say that '*God wills all men to be saved,*' and that He yet gives some men over to strong delusions to believe lies, '*in order that they may be damned!*' Suppose any other book dealt with after this fashion, what would be the result? Simply that an author may be made to say anything we please; we know that Sceptics plead high authority in justification of this method of interpretation; they point to the use of the Bible by ordinary readers, and even by preachers and teachers. We have already admitted that Christians are responsible for many opinions of Scepticism, and need say no more about this; the Sceptic professes to be scientific, to be anxious to find the truth, and to be honestly seeking light on all questions. Let it not be said that the Bible is the only book to which fair-play is to be denied. How carefully students of classical authors read their favourite books; they are most anxious, too, to read in the light of whatever biographical information can be obtained; they laboriously and patiently compare part with part, and especially they seek to get at the whole of an author's utterance on any particular question. No book more demands, no book will more repay, such treatment than the Bible. We have to do justice not only to the *unity* pervading the whole book, but also to the distinctive character of each separate part. Each of its writers preserves his distinct individuality, and views truth from one particular stand-point. No writers can be more distinguished from one another than Nehemiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, David and Amos, Paul and James, Peter and John. Their separate works fit into the building, and help to give it completeness, but each separate writer is his own best interpreter. How much more real and full of meaning the writings of the Prophets, when studied in connection with the history of the Kings of Israel! How much clearer does St. Paul's teaching become when we study each separate epistle in its own light, and seek in the local occasions that give it rise some help to an appreciation of the meaning which is far more than local! We have already dwelt upon the historical element



in the book ; surely this implies that it should be read in a certain order, by those who would gain a true insight into its teachings. Selecting texts at hap-hazard from any part of the volume may be an easy way of reading, but it can never lead to any satisfactory result. Every page of the New Testament is full of ideas that belong to the Old Testament. Many of our Lord's most beautiful utterances are from the pages of the one, and to Him, the only book. He said He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and some of the most sparkling gems of His thought are new rather in their setting than in themselves. The Bible student whose mind is most saturated, so to say, with Old Testament teaching, will best understand the later portions of the record.

In addition to this reading of the book as a whole, we must not deny to this grandest literature what is given to all other great works,—*frequent re-perusals*. Even the schoolboy understands the philosophy of re-reading ; problems in algebra or in geometry that at first appear insoluble grow easy after a third or fourth reading. A great statesman recently told students of Shakespeare to read the text at least twenty times before consulting commentaries. By this time the ideas of the dramatist would be so familiar that comments would either be needless, or much more likely to be appreciated. No method of Bible-reading can be more heartily recommended to both Sceptics and believers than this. How many mistakes would be avoided if the mind were familiar with the whole Book, familiar also with the relation of part to part ! Such familiarity can only come from oft-repeated perusals. Great classical scholars are familiar with every line and every expression of their favourite authors. They look upon the blunders of ignorant critics as not only grotesque, but presumptuous. How much more must this Book of books be read and re-read, if it is to be well and truly known ! We have referred to Mr. Müller, of Bristol ; this good man reads the book in order, beginning at Genesis and ending at Revelation, then turns back again and begins afresh. After having read it through more than a hundred times, he declares it is new as ever, and that every fresh

words. Thus, in order to show that the New Testament teaching is contradictory, St. Paul is made to say that '*God wills all men to be saved,*' and that He yet gives some men over to strong delusions to believe lies, '*in order that they may be damned!*' Suppose any other book dealt with after this fashion, what would be the result? Simply that an author may be made to say anything we please; we know that Sceptics plead high authority in justification of this method of interpretation; they point to the use of the Bible by ordinary readers, and even by preachers and teachers. We have already admitted that Christians are responsible for many opinions of Scepticism, and need say no more about this; the Sceptic professes to be scientific, to be anxious to find the truth, and to be honestly seeking light on all questions. Let it not be said that the Bible is the only book to which fair-play is to be denied. How carefully students of classical authors read their favourite books; they are most anxious, too, to read in the light of whatever biographical information can be obtained; they laboriously and patiently compare part with part, and especially they seek to get at the whole of an author's utterance on any particular question. No book more demands, no book will more repay, such treatment than the Bible. We have to do justice not only to the *unity* pervading the whole book, but also to the distinctive character of each separate part. Each of its writers preserves his distinct individuality, and views truth from one particular stand-point. No writers can be more distinguished from one another than Nehemiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, David and Amos, Paul and James, Peter and John. Their separate works fit into the building, and help to give it completeness, but each separate writer is his own best interpreter. How much more real and full of meaning the writings of the Prophets, when studied in connection with the history of the Kings of Israel! How much clearer does St. Paul's teaching become when we study each separate epistle in its own light, and seek in the local occasions that give it rise some help to an appreciation of the meaning which is far more than local! We have already dwelt upon the historical element

in the book ; surely this implies that it should be read in a certain order, by those who would gain a true insight into its teachings. Selecting texts at hap-hazard from any part of the volume may be an easy way of reading, but it can never lead to any satisfactory result. Every page of the New Testament is full of ideas that belong to the Old Testament. Many of our Lord's most beautiful utterances are from the pages of the one, and to Him, the only book. He said He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and some of the most sparkling gems of His thought are new rather in their setting than in themselves. The Bible student whose mind is most saturated, so to say, with Old Testament teaching, will best understand the later portions of the record.

In addition to this reading of the book as a whole, we must not deny to this grandest literature what is given to all other great works,—*frequent re-perusals*. Even the schoolboy understands the philosophy of re-reading ; problems in algebra or in geometry that at first appear insoluble grow easy after a third or fourth reading. A great statesman recently told students of Shakespeare to read the text at least twenty times before consulting commentaries. By this time the ideas of the dramatist would be so familiar that comments would either be needless, or much more likely to be appreciated. No method of Bible-reading can be more heartily recommended to both Sceptics and believers than this. How many mistakes would be avoided if the mind were familiar with the whole Book, familiar also with the relation of part to part ! Such familiarity can only come from oft-repeated perusals. Great classical scholars are familiar with every line and every expression of their favourite authors. They look upon the blunders of ignorant critics as not only grotesque, but presumptuous. How much more must this Book of books be read and re-read, if it is to be well and truly known ! We have referred to Mr. Müller, of Bristol ; this good man reads the book in order, beginning at Genesis and ending at Revelation, then turns back again and begins afresh. After having read it through more than a hundred times, he declares it is new as ever, and that every fresh

words. Thus, in order to show that the New Testament teaching is contradictory, St. Paul is made to say that '*God wills all men to be saved,*' and that He yet gives some men over to strong delusions to believe lies, '*in order that they may be damned!*' Suppose any other book dealt with after this fashion, what would be the result? Simply that an author may be made to say anything we please; we know that Sceptics plead high authority in justification of this method of interpretation; they point to the use of the Bible by ordinary readers, and even by preachers and teachers. We have already admitted that Christians are responsible for many opinions of Scepticism, and need say no more about this; the Sceptic professes to be scientific, to be anxious to find the truth, and to be honestly seeking light on all questions. Let it not be said that the Bible is the only book to which fair-play is to be denied. How carefully students of classical authors read their favourite books; they are most anxious, too, to read in the light of whatever biographical information can be obtained; they laboriously and patiently compare part with part, and especially they seek to get at the whole of an author's utterance on any particular question. No book more demands, no book will more repay, such treatment than the Bible. We have to do justice not only to the *unity* pervading the whole book, but also to the distinctive character of each separate part. Each of its writers preserves his distinct individuality, and views truth from one particular stand-point. No writers can be more distinguished from one another than Nehemiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, David and Amos, Paul and James, Peter and John. Their separate works fit into the building, and help to give it completeness, but each separate writer is his own best interpreter. How much more real and full of meaning the writings of the Prophets, when studied in connection with the history of the Kings of Israel! How much clearer does St. Paul's teaching become when we study each separate epistle in its own light, and seek in the local occasions that give it rise some help to an appreciation of the meaning which is far more than local! We have already dwelt upon the historical element

in the book ; surely this implies that it should be read in a certain order, by those who would gain a true insight into its teachings. Selecting texts at hap-hazard from any part of the volume may be an easy way of reading, but it can never lead to any satisfactory result. Every page of the New Testament is full of ideas that belong to the Old Testament. Many of our Lord's most beautiful utterances are from the pages of the one, and to Him, the only book. He said He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and some of the most sparkling gems of His thought are new rather in their setting than in themselves. The Bible student whose mind is most saturated, so to say, with Old Testament teaching, will best understand the later portions of the record.

In addition to this reading of the book as a whole, we must not deny to this grandest literature what is given to all other great works,—*frequent re-perusals*. Even the schoolboy understands the philosophy of re-reading ; problems in algebra or in geometry that at first appear insoluble grow easy after a third or fourth reading. A great statesman recently told students of Shakespeare to read the text at least twenty times before consulting commentaries. By this time the ideas of the dramatist would be so familiar that comments would either be needless, or much more likely to be appreciated. No method of Bible-reading can be more heartily recommended to both Sceptics and believers than this. How many mistakes would be avoided if the mind were familiar with the whole Book, familiar also with the relation of part to part ! Such familiarity can only come from oft-repeated perusals. Great classical scholars are familiar with every line and every expression of their favourite authors. They look upon the blunders of ignorant critics as not only grotesque, but presumptuous. How much more must this Book of books be read and re-read, if it is to be well and truly known ! We have referred to Mr. Müller, of Bristol ; this good man reads the book in order, beginning at Genesis and ending at Revelation, then turns back again and begins afresh. After having read it through more than a hundred times, he declares it is new as ever, and that every fresh

words. Thus, in order to show that the New Testament teaching is contradictory, St. Paul is made to say that '*God wills all men to be saved,*' and that He yet gives some men over to strong delusions to believe lies, '*in order that they may be damned!*' Suppose any other book dealt with after this fashion, what would be the result? Simply that an author may be made to say anything we please; we know that Sceptics plead high authority in justification of this method of interpretation; they point to the use of the Bible by ordinary readers, and even by preachers and teachers. We have already admitted that Christians are responsible for many opinions of Scepticism, and need say no more about this; the Sceptic professes to be scientific, to be anxious to find the truth, and to be honestly seeking light on all questions. Let it not be said that the Bible is the only book to which fair-play is to be denied. How carefully students of classical authors read their favourite books; they are most anxious, too, to read in the light of whatever biographical information can be obtained; they laboriously and patiently compare part with part, and especially they seek to get at the whole of an author's utterance on any particular question. No book more demands, no book will more repay, such treatment than the Bible. We have to do justice not only to the *unity* pervading the whole book, but also to the distinctive character of each separate part. Each of its writers preserves his distinct individuality, and views truth from one particular stand-point. No writers can be more distinguished from one another than Nehemiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, David and Amos, Paul and James, Peter and John. Their separate works fit into the building, and help to give it completeness, but each separate writer is his own best interpreter. How much more real and full of meaning the writings of the Prophets, when studied in connection with the history of the Kings of Israel! How much clearer does St. Paul's teaching become when we study each separate epistle in its own light, and seek in the local occasions that give it rise some help to an appreciation of the meaning which is far more than local! We have already dwelt upon the historical element

in the book ; surely this implies that it should be read in a certain order, by those who would gain a true insight into its teachings. Selecting texts at hap-hazard from any part of the volume may be an easy way of reading, but it can never lead to any satisfactory result. Every page of the New Testament is full of ideas that belong to the Old Testament. Many of our Lord's most beautiful utterances are from the pages of the one, and to Him, the only book. He said He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and some of the most sparkling gems of His thought are new rather in their setting than in themselves. The Bible student whose mind is most saturated, so to say, with Old Testament teaching, will best understand the later portions of the record.

In addition to this reading of the book as a whole, we must not deny to this grandest literature what is given to all other great works,—*frequent re-perusals*. Even the schoolboy understands the philosophy of re-reading ; problems in algebra or in geometry that at first appear insoluble grow easy after a third or fourth reading. A great statesman recently told students of Shakespeare to read the text at least twenty times before consulting commentaries. By this time the ideas of the dramatist would be so familiar that comments would either be needless, or much more likely to be appreciated. No method of Bible-reading can be more heartily recommended to both Sceptics and believers than this. How many mistakes would be avoided if the mind were familiar with the whole Book, familiar also with the relation of part to part ! Such familiarity can only come from oft-repeated perusals. Great classical scholars are familiar with every line and every expression of their favourite authors. They look upon the blunders of ignorant critics as not only grotesque, but presumptuous. How much more must this Book of books be read and re-read, if it is to be well and truly known ! We have referred to Mr. Müller, of Bristol ; this good man reads the book in order, beginning at Genesis and ending at Revelation, then turns back again and begins afresh. After having read it through more than a hundred times, he declares it is new as ever, and that every fresh

words. Thus, in order to show that the New Testament teaching is contradictory, St. Paul is made to say that '*God wills all men to be saved,*' and that He yet gives some men over to strong delusions to believe lies, '*in order that they may be damned!*' Suppose any other book dealt with after this fashion, what would be the result? Simply that an author may be made to say anything we please; we know that Sceptics plead high authority in justification of this method of interpretation; they point to the use of the Bible by ordinary readers, and even by preachers and teachers. We have already admitted that Christians are responsible for many opinions of Scepticism, and need say no more about this; the Sceptic professes to be scientific, to be anxious to find the truth, and to be honestly seeking light on all questions. Let it not be said that the Bible is the only book to which fair-play is to be denied. How carefully students of classical authors read their favourite books; they are most anxious, too, to read in the light of whatever biographical information can be obtained; they laboriously and patiently compare part with part, and especially they seek to get at the whole of an author's utterance on any particular question. No book more demands, no book will more repay, such treatment than the Bible. We have to do justice not only to the *unity* pervading the whole book, but also to the distinctive character of each separate part. Each of its writers preserves his distinct individuality, and views truth from one particular stand-point. No writers can be more distinguished from one another than Nehemiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, David and Amos, Paul and James, Peter and John. Their separate works fit into the building, and help to give it completeness, but each separate writer is his own best interpreter. How much more real and full of meaning the writings of the Prophets, when studied in connection with the history of the Kings of Israel! How much clearer does St. Paul's teaching become when we study each separate epistle in its own light, and seek in the local occasions that give it rise some help to an appreciation of the meaning which is far more than local! We have already dwelt upon the historical element

in the book ; surely this implies that it should be read in a certain order, by those who would gain a true insight into its teachings. Selecting texts at hap-hazard from any part of the volume may be an easy way of reading, but it can never lead to any satisfactory result. Every page of the New Testament is full of ideas that belong to the Old Testament. Many of our Lord's most beautiful utterances are from the pages of the one, and to Him, the only book. He said He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and some of the most sparkling gems of His thought are new rather in their setting than in themselves. The Bible student whose mind is most saturated, so to say, with Old Testament teaching, will best understand the later portions of the record.

In addition to this reading of the book as a whole, we must not deny to this grandest literature what is given to all other great works,—*frequent re-perusals*. Even the schoolboy understands the philosophy of re-reading ; problems in algebra or in geometry that at first appear insoluble grow easy after a third or fourth reading. A great statesman recently told students of Shakespeare to read the text at least twenty times before consulting commentaries. By this time the ideas of the dramatist would be so familiar that comments would either be needless, or much more likely to be appreciated. No method of Bible-reading can be more heartily recommended to both Sceptics and believers than this. How many mistakes would be avoided if the mind were familiar with the whole Book, familiar also with the relation of part to part ! Such familiarity can only come from oft-repeated perusals. Great classical scholars are familiar with every line and every expression of their favourite authors. They look upon the blunders of ignorant critics as not only grotesque, but presumptuous. How much more must this Book of books be read and re-read, if it is to be well and truly known ! We have referred to Mr. Müller, of Bristol ; this good man reads the book in order, beginning at Genesis and ending at Revelation, then turns back again and begins afresh. After having read it through more than a hundred times, he declares it is new as ever, and that every fresh

words. Thus, in order to show that the New Testament teaching is contradictory, St. Paul is made to say that '*God wills all men to be saved,*' and that He yet gives some men over to strong delusions to believe lies, '*in order that they may be damned!*' Suppose any other book dealt with after this fashion, what would be the result? Simply that an author may be made to say anything we please; we know that Sceptics plead high authority in justification of this method of interpretation; they point to the use of the Bible by ordinary readers, and even by preachers and teachers. We have already admitted that Christians are responsible for many opinions of Scepticism, and need say no more about this; the Sceptic professes to be scientific, to be anxious to find the truth, and to be honestly seeking light on all questions. Let it not be said that the Bible is the only book to which fair-play is to be denied. How carefully students of classical authors read their favourite books; they are most anxious, too, to read in the light of whatever biographical information can be obtained; they laboriously and patiently compare part with part, and especially they seek to get at the whole of an author's utterance on any particular question. No book more demands, no book will more repay, such treatment than the Bible. We have to do justice not only to the *unity* pervading the whole book, but also to the distinctive character of each separate part. Each of its writers preserves his distinct individuality, and views truth from one particular stand-point. No writers can be more distinguished from one another than Nehemiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, David and Amos, Paul and James, Peter and John. Their separate works fit into the building, and help to give it completeness, but each separate writer is his own best interpreter. How much more real and full of meaning the writings of the Prophets, when studied in connection with the history of the Kings of Israel! How much clearer does St. Paul's teaching become when we study each separate epistle in its own light, and seek in the local occasions that give it rise some help to an appreciation of the meaning which is far more than local! We have already dwelt upon the historical element

in the book ; surely this implies that it should be read in a certain order, by those who would gain a true insight into its teachings. Selecting texts at hap-hazard from any part of the volume may be an easy way of reading, but it can never lead to any satisfactory result. Every page of the New Testament is full of ideas that belong to the Old Testament. Many of our Lord's most beautiful utterances are from the pages of the one, and to Him, the only book. He said He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and some of the most sparkling gems of His thought are new rather in their setting than in themselves. The Bible student whose mind is most saturated, so to say, with Old Testament teaching, will best understand the later portions of the record.

In addition to this reading of the book as a whole, we must not deny to this grandest literature what is given to all other great works,—*frequent re-perusals*. Even the schoolboy understands the philosophy of re-reading ; problems in algebra or in geometry that at first appear insoluble grow easy after a third or fourth reading. A great statesman recently told students of Shakespeare to read the text at least twenty times before consulting commentaries. By this time the ideas of the dramatist would be so familiar that comments would either be needless, or much more likely to be appreciated. No method of Bible-reading can be more heartily recommended to both Sceptics and believers than this. How many mistakes would be avoided if the mind were familiar with the whole Book, familiar also with the relation of part to part ! Such familiarity can only come from oft-repeated perusals. Great classical scholars are familiar with every line and every expression of their favourite authors. They look upon the blunders of ignorant critics as not only grotesque, but presumptuous. How much more must this Book of books be read and re-read, if it is to be well and truly known ! We have referred to Mr. Müller, of Bristol ; this good man reads the book in order, beginning at Genesis and ending at Revelation, then turns back again and begins afresh. After having read it through more than a hundred times, he declares it is new as ever, and that every fresh

words. Thus, in order to show that the New Testament teaching is contradictory, St. Paul is made to say that '*God wills all men to be saved,*' and that He yet gives some men over to strong delusions to believe lies, '*in order that they may be damned!*' Suppose any other book dealt with after this fashion, what would be the result? Simply that an author may be made to say anything we please; we know that Sceptics plead high authority in justification of this method of interpretation; they point to the use of the Bible by ordinary readers, and even by preachers and teachers. We have already admitted that Christians are responsible for many opinions of Scepticism, and need say no more about this; the Sceptic professes to be scientific, to be anxious to find the truth, and to be honestly seeking light on all questions. Let it not be said that the Bible is the only book to which fair-play is to be denied. How carefully students of classical authors read their favourite books; they are most anxious, too, to read in the light of whatever biographical information can be obtained; they laboriously and patiently compare part with part, and especially they seek to get at the whole of an author's utterance on any particular question. No book more demands, no book will more repay, such treatment than the Bible. We have to do justice not only to the *unity* pervading the whole book, but also to the distinctive character of each separate part. Each of its writers preserves his distinct individuality, and views truth from one particular stand-point. No writers can be more distinguished from one another than Nehemiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, David and Amos, Paul and James, Peter and John. Their separate works fit into the building, and help to give it completeness, but each separate writer is his own best interpreter. How much more real and full of meaning the writings of the Prophets, when studied in connection with the history of the Kings of Israel! How much clearer does St. Paul's teaching become when we study each separate epistle in its own light, and seek in the local occasions that give it rise some help to an appreciation of the meaning which is far more than local! We have already dwelt upon the historical element

in the book ; surely this implies that it should be read in a certain order, by those who would gain a true insight into its teachings. Selecting texts at hap-hazard from any part of the volume may be an easy way of reading, but it can never lead to any satisfactory result. Every page of the New Testament is full of ideas that belong to the Old Testament. Many of our Lord's most beautiful utterances are from the pages of the one, and to Him, the only book. He said He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and some of the most sparkling gems of His thought are new rather in their setting than in themselves. The Bible student whose mind is most saturated, so to say, with Old Testament teaching, will best understand the later portions of the record.

In addition to this reading of the book as a whole, we must not deny to this grandest literature what is given to all other great works,—*frequent re-perusals*. Even the schoolboy understands the philosophy of re-reading ; problems in algebra or in geometry that at first appear insoluble grow easy after a third or fourth reading. A great statesman recently told students of Shakespeare to read the text at least twenty times before consulting commentaries. By this time the ideas of the dramatist would be so familiar that comments would either be needless, or much more likely to be appreciated. No method of Bible-reading can be more heartily recommended to both Sceptics and believers than this. How many mistakes would be avoided if the mind were familiar with the whole Book, familiar also with the relation of part to part ! Such familiarity can only come from oft-repeated perusals. Great classical scholars are familiar with every line and every expression of their favourite authors. They look upon the blunders of ignorant critics as not only grotesque, but presumptuous. How much more must this Book of books be read and re-read, if it is to be well and truly known ! We have referred to Mr. Müller, of Bristol ; this good man reads the book in order, beginning at Genesis and ending at Revelation, then turns back again and begins afresh. After having read it through more than a hundred times, he declares it is new as ever, and that every fresh

perusal gives new and increasing light. An epistle becomes ever so much clearer when read at a sitting; and if some part present special difficulty, a third or fourth reading may make it plain to the understanding. It is said that an inquirer after salvation, seeking light and help, was told that he would find 'eternal life' in the Bible if he sought it diligently. Resolved to find the hid treasure, he commenced to read, beginning with Genesis. He found it not in Genesis, nor did a patient reading of Exodus teach him the truth. Faint, yet pursuing, he continued his quest until, in the closing chapters of the prophecies of Isaiah, he found all he sought and more. Perhaps he might have missed the prize had he commenced his studies with the writings of Isaiah. His mind and heart were being prepared and disciplined for the reception of saving truth; the Law, the historical books, and the Psalms, were thus his schoolmasters to lead him to Christ, and to prepare him for the Divine Message of the 'Evangelical Prophet.' So, we doubt not, many Freethinkers would find, if only they would seek with their whole heart, this Divine Wisdom, which alone can make men truly wise.

There are other conditions to which the diligent reader must conform if he is to understand this wonderful book, but these we must pass over. There is, however, one closing remark which must be made on this aspect of the subject. Whilst we can hardly expect a Sceptic, perhaps, to start his reading of Holy Scripture with the Christian conception of the Bible in his mind, we must nevertheless remind him that the true and deepest meaning of this book can never be found by anyone, who does not seek Divine illumination alike for understanding and heart. The 'Bible is the unveiling of the Divine procedure in the highest region to which man's thoughts can rise; recording Divine acts, intimating Divine motives, disclosing Divine designs, shedding Divine light on the past, the present, and the future of man in his relation to God.'¹ Such a record must not be roughly touched by rude and irreverent hands. Rightly to read its pages, we need the open eye, the hushed

¹ Dr. J. McLeod Campbell.

thought, and the consciousness that we are on holy ground. To the Sceptical mind this will appear a begging of the question ; it is the simple and sober truth, and we gain nothing by concealing it from view. Plato demanded from his pupils a knowledge of geometry, and thus secured, if a smaller, a selecter circle. Poetry, to the soul that has no poetic inspiration, is mere verse, or perchance sickly sentiment. What is all this but the simple assertion that for different kinds of truth there is demanded a certain sympathy of soul, and a certain discipline of intellect ? The Bible is open to all, may be read by all, but will never be understood by any, until there is the open candid mind, the humble and childlike heart. Let Sceptics search the Scriptures, but let them know that they are on holy ground, and that they must draw near with holy reverence, seeking the purifying, enlightening, and quickening grace of the Holy Spirit of God. Without this the book will be a sealed book to all ; with this,—and God will give the Spirit to all who reverently ask Him,—the record will reveal to every seeker the way of life. Jesus Christ told the Sceptics of His age that their unbelief arose from their *ignorance of Scripture*. It is not too much to say, that an honest, and earnest attempt on the part of unbelievers to study the Scripture in the spirit we have indicated would probably have for its result, the sweeping away of three-fourths of our popular Scepticism.

CHAPTER XII.

JESUS CHRIST.

‘The final answer to all objections against belief in God is that the Lord Jesus Christ lived in it and died in it.’—PROFESSOR WACE.

‘Trust in testimony is the pivot of human affairs.’—DR. CONDER.

‘And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought ;
Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.’

TENNYSON.

THE Christ of history : this is, on the one hand, the abiding rock of offence for Scepticism, on the other, the chief cornerstone of faith in the supernatural. No Sceptic ought to rest satisfied with his negative creed, unless he can give a rational account of the appearing among men of this wonderful Life. ‘All the logic, the criticism, and the philosophy of Naturalism and of Pantheism, cannot suppress the spontaneous homage (given) to the unrivalled spiritual excellence of Him, who is supernaturalism itself in the midst of human history.’ In the presence of this sublime Life, Scepticism would seem morally impossible. Even where the Sceptic does not, like Thomas of old, say, ‘My Lord and my God,’ he must speak in more faltering accents, with less of confidence in his negative results, when in Christ’s presence ; and if he is really honest and truth-loving, he will also confess that the account given by Scepticism of the origin and meaning of this new Life in humanity, is neither philosophically sound nor spiritually satisfying.

For the last fifty years this theme has engrossed the minds of the ablest and most learned thinkers of Europe, America, and Asia.¹ Ever since the publication of Strauss's 'Life of Jesus,' books on this subject have been pouring forth from the press; still 'Lives of Jesus' and 'Studies in His Life' are appearing, some of them full of freshness and power. Yet from the Sceptical side, by universal consent it is admitted, we have had no true 'Life of Christ.' Germany, the land of Luther as well as Strauss, has supplied us with much of this kind of literature, some of the highest, some of but little, value. The greatest thinkers of this land of thought have bent their spacious and learned brows over this august problem; they have asserted, denied, refuted, constructed and reconstructed, yet they have neither exhausted the subject nor satisfied themselves that the last word has been spoken. Mr. R. Browning, in his suggestive poem 'Christmas Eve and Easter Day,' tells us how a German professor, in his class-room lectures, dealt with 'this myth of Christ:' how he endeavoured to account for all the facts, or alleged facts; how, after having satisfied himself that he had reduced this Pearl of Price to 'dust and ashes,' and when the hearers naturally looked for the 'inference and monition,'—

'That our faith, reduced to such condition,
Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole.'

The learned critic changed his tone completely,—

'He bids us, when we least expect it,
Take back our faith,—if it be not just whole,
Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
Which fact pays damage done rewardingly,
So prize we our dust and ashes accordingly !
"Go home and venerate the myth
I thus have experimented with ;
This man, continue to adore him,
Rather than all who went before him,
And all who ever followed after !"'

¹ Some may think the mention of *Asia* superfluous, but those best familiar with Indian life and thought, to go no further, will admit the truth of this. Jesus Christ is exercising immense influence on the mind and heart of Asia. See 'Lives' of Dr. Wilson, of Bombay, and Dr. Duff, of Calcutta, by Dr. George Smith, for illustration; also the writings of Chunder-Sen, etc.

'This lame, halting, and impotent conclusion, seems pretty much to represent the state of the case after the criticism of the past. Our critics will neither worship Christ nor stone Him; they will neither allow the believer to keep to his view of the facts, nor can they offer any solution of the problem that shall be worthier of acceptance. The poet adds to the above lines the following:

'Surely, for this, I may praise you, my brother!
Will you take the praise in tears or laughter?'

Truly, either in tears or laughter! The learned man bids his students go home and 'venerate the myth;' *this is the advice of the ablest thinkers and best writers in the Sceptical school itself.* The author of 'Supernatural Religion' tries to comfort us with the reflection that what we have lost (as the result of his work) of 'mere fancied benefit from the death of Christ, we shall more than gain from the higher estimate he has enabled us to form of the worth of Christ's moral teaching and character.' Strauss himself, in his best moods, admits Jesus to be the 'Being without whose presence in the mind perfect piety is impossible;' and one of the English high-priests of the 'Religion of Humanity,'¹ so much belauded by Mill and others in our day, declares that the 'more truly we serve Christ, the more thoroughly we mould ourselves into His image, the more keen will be our sympathy and admiration.' What is all this but simply Browning's poetic representation in more prosaic dress? If we listen to the greatest lights in recent or contemporary Scepticism, they simply tell us to venerate Christ more than all the sons of men.

This, too, after they have done their best to explain away the historical Christ. The older Scepticism used to spend its strength in attacking the brief memoirs, in which are gathered together the chief facts about Christ's earthly history. It rejected these Gospels as spurious, and was not ashamed at times to attribute their composition to designing priesthoods. Modern

¹ Dr. Congreve. The favourite book of Congreve's master, Comte, was the 'Imitation of Christ.' See Farrar's 'Witness of History to Christ,' p. 206.

critics feel that this explanation is no longer tenable, and hence they have frankly abandoned this ground; they admit the essential trustworthiness of the narrative, while claiming the right to reject those parts with which they do not agree. Still there are said to be 'interpolations' and 'numerous defects' in the Gospel history, but in the main it is accepted; even John's Gospel, long a fierce battle-ground, is being received with more favour, and soon we may expect even larger concessions to faith in this direction from the freest of critics.¹ How do we explain all this? The explanation is simply that *facts have prevailed, and that the more deeply men have studied these memoirs, the more they have been convinced that they are substantially true.* Men who make no pretence to great critical ability, see plainly that the *character* of Jesus Christ is much more difficult to deal with than the stories told by His disciples and friends. Grant, if you will have it so, that there are interpolations,—that miracles may be invented to gratify eager curiosity and unhealthy ambition,—how could men such as these writers were invent this *character*? How could simple peasants, unlettered fishermen, invent discourses like these? 'Never man spake like this Man,' is not only the testimony of the honest officers sent by the designing rulers to apprehend Christ, but of the ablest thinkers who have ever studied, even but imperfectly, His words. Both Mr. J. S. Mill and Mr. M. Arnold, neither of them men prejudiced in favour of the traditional view, ridicule the idea of invention here. Christ spoke 'over the heads' of his best reporters; the 'poor stuff' they could have invented would ill bear comparison with His words of 'grace and truth.' Thus the Sceptics of our time who are least willing to accept the popular creed, are obliged to bear testimony *to the facts on which it is based.*

They also bear testimony, full and unequivocal, to the essential greatness of Jesus Christ. It is, alas! true, they deny to Him that place which He occupies in the New Testament records, in the Creeds of the Church, and in the hearts of all

¹ See Professor Westcott's very able 'Introduction to St. John's Gospel,' 'The Speaker's Commentary on the New Testament,' vol. ii.

His true followers, but, after their own fashion, they confess His Name to be above every other name. We do not now stop to consider whether theirs be a consistent position or not, nor do we ask whether what they say is all they ought to say. Take the simple fact as it stands, and that it is fact no one can deny, that after half a century of the keenest and most hostile criticism, Jesus Christ stands out to-day before the world, according even to Scepticism, as higher than all the sons of men, and as worthy of the admiration and reverence of all who can appreciate true greatness.

We have already referred to the author of 'Supernatural Religion;' the following words are to be found near the close of his second volume, and may be assumed to give the deliberate opinion of this chief Sceptic. 'The teachings of Jesus, however, carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity. The influence of His spiritual religion has been rendered doubly great by the unparalleled purity and elevation of His own character. Surpassing in His sublime simplicity and earnestness the moral grandeur of Sākya Muni,¹ and putting to the blush the sometimes sullied, though generally admirable teachings of Socrates and Plato, and the whole round of Greek philosophers, He presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with His own lofty principle, so that the "Imitation of Christ" has become almost the final word in the preaching of his religion, and must continue to be one of the most powerful elements in its permanence.' The reservations here and there appearing in the above, show that the author of this estimate would gladly have found other elements in the character and life so described, yet even he is compelled, by the force of truth, to bear his testimony; it is, that this Man is no ordinary being, and His life not to be considered as on a level with other lives. Nay more, the critic feels that nothing higher is either possible or conceivable, and hence he speaks of the *permanence of the ideal*. Almost every page of 'Ecce Homo' would furnish higher and, so to say, more spontaneous admiration, and this

¹ *I.e.* Buddha.

from one whose position, if we may judge from his most recent work, is far removed from that of a humble believer in Jesus Christ.

The late Mr. J. S. Mill much scandalized the Freethinking world by his utterances about Jesus Christ in his essay on 'Theism.' Naturally, Mill's views have attracted a good deal of public attention, and have provoked very different comments. Believers in Christianity have appealed to them as proof that every honest mind must, as it knows more of Christ, come nearer and nearer to the Christian's estimate of His character; Sceptics, on the other hand, have seen nothing but inconsistency, and the *perturbing influence of a great sorrow* on the logician's mind, in Mill's words. We are not careful to uphold the consistency of Mr. Mill; doubtless there are expressions in his 'Liberty,' and perhaps in his work on 'Utilitarianism,' not easily reconciled with the later view. But then dates should be remembered, and the fact that, in the latest utterance, we have the most matured estimate of the thinker. According to Miss Taylor, who ought to know, the essay on Theism has both 'greater value and less than other of the author's works. The last considerable work which he completed, it shows the latest state of the author's mind, the carefully balanced result of the deliberations of a lifetime.'¹

What, then, is this carefully balanced result? Already we have referred to it, but here a fuller discussion is possible. According to Mill, there is 'about the life and sayings of Jesus a stamp of personal originality combined with profundity of insight which . . . must place the Prophet of Nazareth, even in the estimation of those who have no belief in His inspiration, in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast. . . . Nor, even now, would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.' Again, 'Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left,—a unique figure, not more unlike all His precursors than

¹ 'Introductory Notice' by Miss H. Taylor to Mill's 'Three Essays on Religion.'

all His followers. . . . When to this we add that, *to the conception of the rational Sceptic, it remains a possibility that Christ actually was what He supposed Himself to be,* etc. We are well aware that Mill's views are open to criticism, and that from different sides. It is far from rational treatment of the records, to dismiss with a mere wave of the hand the claims to divinity there put forward on behalf of Christ. What Christ 'supposed Himself to be,' must be discovered, not in the *à priori* conclusions of nineteenth-century Sceptics, but in the records of His life, and the reports of His teaching, honestly interpreted. It is saying but little to admit that the rational Sceptic may accept Christ's estimate of Himself, and then to unsay this by rejecting the only information we have, or can ever hope to have, on this subject. According to Mill, not only is '*Theism*' possible, but the life, character, and teaching of Jesus Christ are essential portions of the evidence for this view of things ; but if this be granted, much more will be established than either Mill or any other rational Sceptic has admitted.

Putting aside all criticism of this sort, leaving out of sight the unsatisfactory and even, as it appears to us, *illogical* character of Mill's views about Christ, and looking simply at the effect produced in this thinker by the records of the 'wonderful life,' we see much that is suggestive. According to one who claimed, above all things, to be rational and to sift all testimony, this Name is above every name ; this character was never invented by any disciples, and even now it remains true that to act so as to be approved by Jesus Christ is the surest way to do right. Here, then, Dr. Congreve, the author of '*Supernatural Religion*,' Mr. Mill and other Sceptics agree. They seem to say to us : 'If you would reach the highest possible elevation in life, follow Christ ; if you would have keen insight into the meaning of things, if you would always act so as to be in harmony with the moral law, then imitate Christ.' May we not recall in such a connection the Master's own words, spoken when few recognised His claims and submitted to His authority ? 'As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world ;'

¹ See 'Essay on Theism,' closing portions.

and again, 'He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

To these and other similar testimonies may be added the well-known estimate of Lecky, the eloquent historian of European morals, of Rationalism, and, we may add, the careful and painstaking expounder of eighteenth century life and thought. Lecky must, we fear, be classed among the number of those who do not fully accept the supernatural, yet no one can read his account of the early life of the Church without feeling that his heart at least is in sympathy with the spirit of Christianity. Referring to the influence of the new faith upon the life of men, he says, 'It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love ; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions ; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice ; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life.'¹ These are the words, not of some rhetorical preacher, anxious to move his audience ; they are the words of a sober historian accustomed to weigh evidence, and to estimate the quality of the forces operating within human life. That they are words of truth and soberness will, we believe, be conceded by those who know the most of the world's history.

Other testimonies might easily be added, but for the purpose we have in view enough has been said. Napoleon I. is often quoted in this connection, and his words are both remarkable and suggestive. He was himself too selfish a man to be accepted as an authority about unselfishness incarnate ; at the same time, he knew men, and was well able to judge of all matters relating to ordinary human character. His words are these : 'I know men, and Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial

¹ 'History of European Morals,' vol. ii. p. 8.

minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founder of empires, and the gods of other religions ; that resemblance does not exist. There is between Christ and all other religions whatsoever the distance of infinity ; from the first day to the last He is the same, majestic and simple, infinitely firm and infinitely gentle.¹

According then to the testimony of the ablest and wisest of Sceptical thinkers, Jesus Christ cannot be compared with any of the great teachers and leaders of men that have arisen in this world. His is a personality unique and peerless, and his character cannot be touched by the strongest critical solvents of modern Scepticism. Not only is Christ above all men, but his *personality differs from that of all other men*. A suggestive chapter, in what may be called the anatomy of modern critical Scepticism, has been written by Dr. Matheson ; his subject is the *originality* of the character of Jesus Christ. The questions raised as to the truth or falsehood of the records of His life do not enter into this problem ; grant only that such a character appears in history at a certain period of time, how is it to be accounted for ? Call it real, the simple and truthful representation of what was actually seen on earth ; call it ideal, a picture of the fancy, a 'sweet Galilean vision,' product of some gifted artist ; still the picture is before us, and some rational account ought to be given of its origin. Dr. Matheson, looking at the character from this standpoint, compares and contrasts it with what he considers the *four great ideals of the world* ; these exhaust, apparently, the power and ingenuity of men, as man is known before the Christian era. The *first* is the ideal of *physical strength*, a barbaric type, Asiatic in origin, and at one time holding considerable sway over the imaginations of men. The Christ of history has nothing in common with this, for He took pleasure in inviting to Himself the weak and suffering and heavy laden. The *second* is the ideal of *intellectual power*, the Platonic or Greek type of character ; no less unfit is this to represent the character of Jesus. In Him there is

¹ From Farrar's 'Witness of History,' etc., p. 81. See Redford's 'Handbook of Evidenece,' p. 197 ; also Newman's 'Grammar of Assent.'

nothing that would, from this stand-point, be called *great of soul* ; all His teachings lead in an opposite direction, and the life of Christ is the very death of Platonism. Pass we to the *third* ideal, that created by the poetry of Greece, by the dreamy indolence of its people, or the splendid genius of its artists, what we call the *æsthetic type*. Here the antagonism is most marked, and the men who knew most of Christ, and who had received the richest baptism of His Spirit, were the most determined foes of this whole type of life. New ideals of beauty filled their hearts, and new types of human excellence were created by their activities. *Lastly*, if we come to the Roman ideal of manhood, that *regal majesty* admired and developed by the masters of the world, we find the same impassable gulf. Christ is indeed a King, but not after the pattern of Cæsar. He came to found a kingdom, to rule over the hearts and lives of men, but even the most ambitious of the Emperors would have failed to see anything in the ambitions, aims, and ends of Jesus hostile to Roman authority ;¹ the foundation of His rule is self-sacrifice, and the symbol of His authority is a cross. In other words, Christ's ideal and the ideal of the Roman are wide as the poles asunder. How then are we to account for the appearance of this new type of human life, this new *ideal of manhood* ? It is a *new creation*, must have come from the fertile mind of some consummate artist, or it must have come down from above into human life. The limitations of human power are such that we cannot, on scientific principles, account for its creation by man. It is not given to man either to create or to destroy ; he can only transform, combine, and use materials already in existence. His ideals of character are well known and perfectly well understood ; we can explain how they came into being, and under what circumstances they were changed or modified. This ideal is not man's, nor is it a combination of his types of manhood ; it stands forth before our eyes in its solitary greatness,

¹ 'He had no antipathy to Rome, but was willing to be a dutiful citizen of the Empire. He did not feel that His Kingdom either denied or excluded Cæsar ; that tribute either touched or tarnished His supremacy.'—Fairbairn, 'Studies in the Life of Christ,' p. 104.

not created by, but given to man, the best 'evidence of a new life in humanity, the outpouring of a fresh vitality, and the manifestation of a higher power.'¹

Dr. Bushnell, in his suggestive work on 'Nature and the Supernatural,' rests, with confidence, the whole superstructure of Christianity on this sure foundation; 'for if there be in Jesus a character which is not human, then has something broken into the world which is not of it, and the spell of unbelief is broken.' We earnestly recommend to every truth-seeking mind Bushnell's discussion of this subject. It is full of fresh and suggestive thought, and is well fitted to undermine the doubts and bias of Scepticism. The 'character of Jesus forbids His possible classification with men;' His beginning is not like that of others; His type of piety, like His character, is unique; everything, in short, in and about Jesus is original, yet all is supremely natural, and, so to speak, human-like. Instinctively we say with the poet, as we gaze on this perfect life, so unlike ours, and yet so like what our conscience tells us we ought to be—

'Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, Thou.'²

Mr. Row, in his Bampton Lectures, regards this subject as the very citadel of Christianity, and sees in the life and work of Jesus Christ the all-sufficient answer to the Scepticism of our age, and of every age. Here we find in history a new power, a moral energy which the human forces that energize in human life, which have been at work for thousands of years, which are perfectly well known and understood, cannot account for. Here we have the grandest *moral miracle* in history, and one which Scepticism can never resolve into the natural. The 'supernatural action' of Jesus in history is, according to Mr. Row, a fact 'capable of verification' by the tests of the most exact science. He starts with the evidence of Lecky, already given, regards this as the simple fact, verifiable by all who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Jesus Christ is the one solitary character in history capable of acting upon all kinds of men,

¹ See *Contemporary Review*, November, 1878.

² 'In Memoriam.'

capable of regenerating life, Himself so far above men that He cannot be classified with them ; His teaching cannot be compared with that of other great masters, whether ancient or modern ; like His Personality, this too is unique ; the 'unity of His character is a proof of its historical reality,' a unity which cannot be explained away, and which can only rest on a basis of reality ; in short, we have in the Person and work of Jesus Christ the one and all-convincing evidence of the Divine origin and authority of Christianity.¹

What is the answer of Scepticism to all this argument, and to all this evidence ? 'The problem infidelity has to solve is this : how can the recorded facts, attesting His character and work be explained, or explained away, and still leave room for reverence ? Not in the miracles alone, but in the whole life of Jesus, supernaturalism has its stronghold. Here, and here alone, all is to be won, or all lost. If Christ's whole life can be interpreted on the basis of naturalism, and He still remain the moral hero of humanity ; if such faith in Him can be retained while prophecy and miracle are annulled, then the battle of infidelity is substantially gained.'² Scepticism has given us no such answer, has given nothing even approaching to a complete answer, to the argument from the character and work of Christ. True, there have been attempts, many and varied, to resolve the whole into 'myth ;' but the reality is far too substantial for such processes. Attacks are made on the *records* of Christ's life, their inconsistent character, the miracles they narrate, the absurd rumours their authors believe ; by the admission of even Sceptics themselves these attacks have failed, and after the boldest efforts of the critics, the character of Christ stands out before the world in more majestic outline than before they commenced. Criticism has but removed some of the dust from this wonderful portrait. Strauss failed, and where giants are too weak, ordinary mortals need not expect to prevail. Renan's

¹ See also a very thorough discussion of this inexhaustible theme by Smyth, chapters v. and vi. of 'Old Faiths in New Light.' Also Ullmann's 'Sinlessness of Jesus,' and the early portion of Liddon's 'Bampton Lectures.'

² See 'Faith and Philosophy,' by Henry B. Smith, D.D., LL.D., p. 402.

Christ is the most unreal, the most impossible of all beings ; that a Being who has received the homage of the grandest minds all through the ages, who has done more to regenerate mankind than all philosophers and all moralists, a Being without whose image in the mind piety is impossible, and who is the highest ideal we can imagine of goodness and truth, should have lent Himself to such vulgar tricks and devices as Renan suggests, is utterly incredible. Were this possible, then indeed out of the same fountain might come sweet and bitter ; men themselves untrue and impure might be selected as the preachers, teachers, inspirers, and patterns, of purity and truth ! 'The Jesus depicted by Renan is a figment of naturalism ; a conception that can neither be imaged forth nor realized ; it has the outward form and framework of human life, but within there is not even an immortal personal consciousness. We have in the last analysis only the shadow of death.'¹

Nor can we admit the validity of the more indirect process by which Scepticism evades the question of all questions,— 'what think ye of Christ?' We cannot permit the Sceptic to reject all the miraculous elements in the narratives, to refuse homage to the historical Christ, and then, out of the scattered fragments remaining, to make another Jesus, who is not the Christ of history. The Sceptic himself must see the illogical and unsatisfactory character of Mill's method. What is the use of saying that a Sceptic may accept Christ's estimate of Himself, and then refusing to go to the historical records for that estimate ? Scepticism must not be allowed to deal with history after this manner ; let it honestly accept, or let it honestly reject, Jesus of Nazareth. Critics must not mutilate the form of this glorious Person, and then admiringly cry, 'Ecce Homo !' An honest examination of what are termed the 'spurious Gospels' will be enough to show that the four Evangelists have given us a real and not a fancy picture. The kind of 'poor stuff,' to use Mill's expression, given in these false Gospels is sufficient to manifest the thoughts of their compilers, and also confirm the honesty, simplicity, and straightforwardness of our Evangelists.

¹ Henry B. Smith on 'Renan's Life of Jesus.'

Scepticism ought then seriously and boldly to face this problem. How does it account for the appearing at such a time, among such a people, and under such conditions, of Jesus Christ? He is neither Jew nor Gentile, so to speak; belongs neither to this nor that age; speaks in no particular accent; wears no particular garb; belongs to no period of history;—He is the Son of Man, the Child of Humanity, as well as its Teacher and Lord. Scepticism must explain the evolution of such a Being, must trace back to its hidden roots and favouring conditions all that blossomed forth in Judæa. As has been pointed out by Dr. Newman Smyth, Unbelief has never yet done this,—has not even seriously attempted to do it. ‘Science can admit the appearance of nothing original in the world; all things that appear to us seem to come to pass in the regular operation of natural laws. Every thread of life is inextricably looped with a thousand other threads; Nature never breaks her web, and no science can find the beginning nor the ending of so much as a single thread of her spinning. The force of this scientific conviction we would neither void nor abate. We accept the law of continuity as a law of things which it is infidelity to truth to deny. . . . Two conclusions, both positive and substantial, are brought over against each other. On the one hand is the Person of Christ—the ultimate moral fact of history—whose origin cannot be derived from the past by any of the known laws of heredity¹—a sublime historical phenomenon, unexampled and unexplained—a mystery of being and of influence, whose spell has been upon all the passing generations—a name, above all others, which grows not less but more admirable as the ages come and go. We refuse to abandon the scientific principle of continuity in reading the life of Christ; we also decline to give up the witness of history and the testimony of the human soul to the supernatural Person

¹ ‘Where is the person that thinks it possible for our historical conditions to create a Christ? But if the creation of Christ transcends our historical conditions, was it possible to His own? Or does He not stand out so much their superior as to be, while a child of time, the Son of the Eternal, the only Begotten, who has descended to earth from the bosom of the Father, that He might declare Him?’—*Fairbairn*.

of Christ at the command of the principle of continuity.¹ But Scepticism holds to the one and despises the other ; it clings to the law of continuity in the physical realm, while it refuses to apply it to the spiritual, to the moral facts of history, and the forces that 'energize' in Jesus of Nazareth. Hence its Christ is neither human nor divine,—neither a possible man nor the historic Christ, who for our sakes became man and lived among us a truly human life.

Leaving this aspect of Christ's relation to the Scepticism of our time, we come to another which seems to us still more attractive, and more fitted to help an honest seeker after the truth ; we refer to what may be termed the *moral authority* of Jesus Christ. This is a matter about which all Sceptics are exceedingly sensitive ; they are most unwilling to accept any authority, and for ever are asserting the privileges of 'Free-thought.' And yet, when we look into this question more narrowly, we find that no class of men are readier to bow before mere authority. Perhaps not one in a hundred of our Freethinkers know for themselves either the principles, methods, or facts of Science ; yet they constantly remind us that *Science* says this or that. In like manner, they are fond of citing Pagan authors as if they were authorities ! Why should we be so often told about the opinions of Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and others, if *authority* is not to be respected ? The truth is, the Sceptic is as willing as the rest of mankind to offer homage at the altar of authority, provided only and always that this authority be *non-Christian*.

Now we make our appeal with confidence to this rational instinct, and we should like to use this lever of respect for authority to lift the Sceptic up to a higher life of trust in One who is worthy of homage. This is not the highest ground, we admit, but we may rise by 'stepping-stones' here as elsewhere. Those who wish to study the question of *authority* in relation to Jesus Christ, will find a full and very instructive chapter on this subject in Dr. Conder's 'Basis of Faith.' There the nature of authority and its true place in religious life are carefully de-

¹ 'Old Faiths in New Light.'

fined ; there, too, the *authority* of Jesus Christ is vindicated with skill and ability of high order. Jesus Christ is the only Being who *fully knows*, and therefore the only One who can truly testify to us about God and the highest truths of religion.¹

Let us, however, take lower ground, and start with what Sceptics themselves admit. We have seen how the author of 'Supernatural Religion,' while refusing to allow any place to miracle, and while rejecting the supernatural, yet professes to attach high importance to the *moral teachings* of Jesus Christ. We have also seen how Positivists urge us to imitate Christ, and how men like Lecky and Stuart Mill speak of the character and influence of Christ. Thus it is affirmed by the ablest thinkers among Sceptics themselves, that Jesus is the highest moral teacher the world has ever seen ; *then He must see more clearly, and know more fully, and be better fitted to guide us, than any other being known to man !* Leaving out of sight for the moment His exact place in the scale of being, we are allowed by Sceptics to say that Jesus is the wisest, the best, and the truest, guide we know in life. It may be objected that all Sceptics do not accept this estimate ; that men like F. W. Newman, for example, deny the moral perfection of Christ, and find serious fault with some parts of His teachings. We do not forget these exceptions ; but we, at the same time, remember that such views are exceptional, and are not held by the men who have the best claim to speak on behalf of the 'Freethought' of our age. However much fault may be found, from a theological point of view, with estimates such as those given by Mill, Lecky, and the author of 'Supernatural Religion,' we have to admit that they do credit to the *moral* feeling and insight of the critics.

Taking this view of the case, there are two simple conclusions that seem to us both natural and necessary. *In the first place*, a Being who has been the source of so much blessing to the race, who has been the Inspirer, Teacher, and Pattern, of all that has been best, must be Himself *pure and good*. Forces are measured by their products, both as to quantity and quality. Beings who leave such results behind them must themselves possess a cer-

¹ See the first part of Dr. Conder's lecture on 'Jesus.'

tain character. This is one of the simplest, yet most universal of all laws, accepted by philosopher and peasant alike and equally. Christ taught the people to judge the tree by its fruits, and Christ Himself must be judged by this test.

Simple as are these remarks, they open up a whole region yet unexplored by modern Scepticism. There was a time when Sceptics could make short work of all this, by calling Christianity a priestly invention, the work of designing and conscious impostors. This view is no longer possible in the face of modern criticism of the New Testament, and it has, in fact, been abandoned by all the leading opponents of supernatural religion. 'The Apostles,' we are now told, 'were not bad men,—were indeed good men,—only they were mistaken men. Their motives were pure, their lives self-sacrificing and noble, only they were led, under the influence of blind enthusiasm for an idea, to accept as real the Resurrection of Christ ; this we know to have been a purely imaginary event.' Thus modern Scepticism preserves the honesty of Apostles and apostolic men, but only at the cost of their sanity. Paul and his comrades answered by anticipation all arguments of this sort. They said in plain words and with intelligent appreciation of the issues involved. 'Either Christ was raised from the dead, or we are liars ;' not therefore mistaken men, but designing men, if you please ; not fools incapable of forming sound conclusions, but perjurers, unless Christianity be as represented by them. The Sceptic must really face this question more fairly. Paul needs no compassion from the apostles of modern unbelief. He is their match in mental ability, and needs from them no certificate of intellectual competency. This is how the matter presented itself to his mind, and this is how he stated the case long before the 'mythical' theory was invented.

The same argument must be applied to his Master and ours, and we earnestly urge the Sceptic to give it full and serious consideration. Is it conceivable that a being so pure and noble as Christ is confessed to have been, could have been either a deceiver of others, or Himself self-deceived ? Can we suppose that those streams of pure, moral life, that have so refreshed

and fertilized the ages, and along whose banks have grown up the flowers and fruits of the holiest life and the purest love, came from a fountain itself impure? The supposition is supremely absurd. The fountain whose waters fertilize whole tracts of country must itself be fresh and life-giving. The Being whose life is the noblest incentive to goodness, must Himself be good. The Teacher who, more than all others, is able to enlighten even the wisest, must Himself be enlightened and wise. The record of Christ's life tells us how He went about doing good and only good. His own testimony is that He came to bear witness to the truth, and that *all who were of the truth would hear His voice*. These testimonies have been confirmed and illustrated by whole centuries of experience under all possible human conditions, and we hold it simply incredible that Jesus could have been and done all this had He not Himself been holy, and true, and good. We measure forces by the 'work done;' and so we estimate their character by the character of the work done; let the honest Sceptic honestly apply this scientific method to the Christ of history, and he must ultimately be led to embrace the faith of the Christian. The earnest, honest, seeker never in the end misses this straight and narrow path. As the Master Himself whispered in the ear of the Jewish rabbi who came to Him by night, 'He that doeth truth cometh to the light.'¹

Secondly, if Jesus Christ be all that even Sceptics themselves have confessed Him to be, He must be regarded as an authority, the very highest authority, too, for men like ourselves. No honest man, if he be at the same time a humble man, can well escape from this conclusion; be he ever so Sceptical, he must

¹ 'Admit that Christ was so exceptional a soul that God was in Him in a thoroughly exceptional manner; admit with Rousseau, that He lived a sinless life; admit, with the most scholarly of modern infidels, that God was in Him in such a sense as He never was in any other created being; admit this, and you have conceded enough to prove that you logically ought to regard this exceptionally holy and wise Being as veracious; and, therefore, that you, in consistency with your own admissions, ought to accept Christ's testimony concerning Himself.'—Joseph Cook's 'Monday Lecture,' vol. i., p. 109.

feel that Christ is a better man than himself, to say the least. 'Here I find myself,' he must often reason, 'a being full of infirmities, having within me and around me limitations of all kinds; yea, a sinful being, *conscious, when in my best moods, of anarchy within my own nature.* I live in a world of sin, among people who do the things, habitually, they ought not to do, who know and confess this, but who still continue to do evil; I myself often feel in like manner guilty. I am also an ignorant being, knowing almost nothing, for certain, about the past, absolutely nothing about the future; all my teachers seem likewise ignorant. They can give me no satisfactory account of either my origin, my nature, or my destiny; they confess that they are like "infants crying in the night," like "infants crying for the light." And yet I do know that goodness and truth are realities, and, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, I feel certain that under any circumstances, and in any world, it must be right to do right, and must also be well with the good. In my best moods, I long for clearer light, and sigh for moral strength to do what my conscience affirms to be my duty, but what, alas! is not always in harmony with my inclination! I have also within me an instinct of reverence for what is above me, and know that I ought to accept and follow the guidance of those who know more, and who are *morally better than myself.* Past experience, indeed, teaches me that I can rise morally only as I feel my own defects, and seek to imitate the excellences of others. Neglect to do this has often thrown me back in my upward journey, and any tendency to rebel against this true moral instinct, I find, is fatal to both mental peace and moral progress. Here, in the light of history, *manifestly true and trustworthy,* there stands out before me, like the contour of some mountain peak on a clear day, the image of a majestic Being, whose presence has filled the ages with wonder and admiration, and who has been the source and the inspiration of all that was best in the noblest of men. Surely it must be at once my duty and my privilege to listen to the voice of this greatest of all Teachers, and to submit my life to the guidance of this holiest of Beings.' Some such position as this

must be felt by an honest Sceptic to be both rational and dutiful. If, as Mill asserts, the actual life of Jesus be the highest ideal we can form of what man ought to be and do, it must be right for man to follow Christ ; and if he knows more about goodness and truth, about conduct and character, than the wisest of men, it must be our duty to call Him *Master*.

Here then, on this lowest step of the ladder, which after all reaches to God, the honest seeker may plant his foot, ought to plant his foot, if he really aims at the highest life ; how much were possible for man if only he could be persuaded to take this lowest place, and to hear even the faintest whisper of that Voice which says, ' Come unto Me ! '

This is our hope for the Scepticism of our age, and the hope is not altogether vain ; it has applied its most powerful critical solvents to the character of Jesus Christ, but in vain ; after experimenting much with what it calls this ' myth,' it can but end in bidding the world offer its homage. Nor need we despise this offering in the outer court of the temple of truth ; there is hope for the heart that beats faster as it thinks of the Prophet of Nazareth.

Napoleon I. said that if ' once the Divine character of Christ is admitted, Christian doctrine exhibits the precision and clearness of algebra, so that we are struck with admiration at its scientific connection and unity.' There is certainly very little of either precision or clearness about the position of modern Scepticism. It will neither ' worship Christ ' nor ' stone ' Him ; will neither admit the Christian claim nor deny to Him the highest among its places of honour. Ultimately, we feel certain, the *unscientific character* of its estimate must become apparent, and hence our desire that men should rise, even by means of this lower estimate, to one more truly rational, as well as more in harmony with the records.

A great German historian once wrote to a friend that he had been reading the ancient historians in their chronological order, and that somehow he took it into his head to study the New Testament : ' How shall I describe to you,' he says, ' what I found therein ! I had not read it for many years, and was prejudiced

against it before I took it in hand. The light which struck Paul with blindness on his way to Damascus was not more strange,—more surprising to him than it was to me, when I suddenly discovered the fulfilment of all hopes, the highest perfection of Philosophy, the explanation of all revelations, the key to all the seeming contradictions of the physical and moral world. . . . I saw the religion appear at the moment most favourable for its appearance, and in the manner most adapted to its acceptance. . . . *The whole world seemed to be ordered for the sole purpose of furthering the religion of the Redeemer*; and if this religion is not Divine I understand nothing at all. I have read no book on the subject, but in all my studies of the ancient times, I have always felt the want of something, and it was not till I knew our Lord, that all was clear to me; with Him there is nothing which I am not able to solve.¹

Whether the Sceptic agrees with Napoleon that the character of Christ makes the whole system of Christianity as simple as an algebraic equation or not, we believe he will agree with Müller that it sheds new light upon the whole of the world's history, and makes the Bible a new book. If those who are perplexed with doubts, and who feel the chilling influence of modern unbelief, could be persuaded to begin their study of the supernatural at this point, they might find it possible to make true progress.

Professor Wace says the 'final answer to all objections against belief in God is that the Lord Jesus Christ lived and died in it'; this idea is capable of a much wider extension, and may be made to cover the whole ground of the supernatural. We make our appeal with the utmost confidence to this *Supreme Authority*, and allow it to settle for us both perplexing and doubtful questions. Does the Sceptic find difficulties in connection with the Old Testament? Let him accept here the guidance of Jesus Christ, who knew it well, and who often made His appeal to its pages. Is he bewildered by modern controversies about man's origin, nature, and destiny? Let him accept Christ's authority, for He best knows all that can be

¹ Luthardt's 'Fundamental Truths,' p. 352.

known about man,—whence he came, and whither he goes. The wisest of modern teachers frankly tell us that about such mysteries they know nothing;¹ they know, and can determine with more or less of accuracy, the velocity of light, the constituent elements of the solar atmosphere, the form and density of distant stars, but about man's 'whence' and 'whither' they have no knowledge. This wisest of all teachers says *He knows*, and being what He is, we are entitled to place implicit confidence in His testimony. He says He is the 'Way, the Truth, and the Life,' and that if we submit to His authority, and follow where He leads, we shall no longer 'walk in darkness, but have the light of life.' So to trust and so to follow must be right; it is the part of wisdom for us to accept Newton's authority in connection with astronomy and physics, for Newton knew best. We accept as authorities in matters with which they are professedly familiar, men like Huxley, Tyndal, Darwin, and Spencer; and perhaps those who know nothing at all of even the rudiments of the sciences with which they deal, are loudest in their professions of devotion. This is both natural and right. Even a little child may be, for the stranger travelling in some unknown region, a sufficient authority, and he would be more than childish not to accept help from such an one, however young. In the region of the spiritual, by universal consent, Jesus Christ is the Authority, for he knows best. Assuming no principles higher than those by which the ordinary man guides himself in the conduct of life, making, at this stage, no claims greater than the world's wise men are accustomed to make, we affirm that the honest Sceptic is bound to accept and to follow the guidance of Jesus Christ. If it be right to reverence what is above me, to trust to those who know better, and to follow every light that is brighter and steadier than my own, then it must be right for me to 'take up Christ's yoke and learn of Him.'²

Call this a lower place, if you will; if the Sceptic will but accept it he will soon learn to trust where he is now doubtful, and to affirm where he now denies; for Jesus Christ is the truth and soul of Christianity.

¹ Some of them go beyond this and say that *nothing can be known*. This is the old error of making man the 'measure of the universe.'

² See Canon Liddon's 'Bampton Lectures,' p. 127.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FAILURE OF SCEPTICISM.

‘We believe that human beings can only live and prosper together on the condition of the recognition of *duty*, and duty has no meaning and no sanction except as implying responsibility to a Power above and beyond humanity.’—J. A. FROUDE.

‘The moral law, as it has received its latest and highest exposition in Christian doctrine.’—DR. MAUDSLEY.

‘If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Be not deceived : evil company doth corrupt good manners.’—ST. PAUL.

SCEPTICS often remind us that Christianity has failed,—that the best minds have ceased to be influenced by its teachings, and they are also bold in their predictions of its speedy disappearance. If by *failure* it is meant that all men have not yet embraced the Gospel of Christ, or that even among the so-called Christian nations, the majority of the people have not submitted their lives to the control of Christian principles, then it must be confessed that there is too much truth in this view. If, on the other hand, it is meant that Christianity is not adapted to man’s nature and wants, that the Gospel has no power to regenerate the heart and to renew the life of man, then we must declare that such charges cannot be supported by evidence. Christianity has vindicated its right over man by its power to make him all he ought to be ; Christian ideas are now the most powerful forces in all civilized nations ; and, as even Sceptics must confess, the future belongs to this system of thought and life as it belongs to no other. It may, however, be truly said that Scepticism has failed. It has power to create suspicion and distrust, to undermine faith, and to shake the stability of the moral life of many ; it has power to destroy, but not to

build up. When Professor Huxley was a member of the London School Board, he much astonished his Free-thinking admirers by the earnestness with which he advocated the reading of the Bible in schools. Freethinkers regard this book as the very symbol of all that is retrograde, and hence they could not understand why an apostle of the New Order of Things should be so infatuated, as to introduce into the education of youth what had wrought such havoc in former days. The learned professor frankly confessed that the Bible view of the universe was not his, but he at the same time maintained that the book supplied just the kind of ideas that were most needed to elevate the youth of London, and to counteract the degrading influences at work in their homes and life. Perhaps he agreed somewhat with the view of things expressed by Mrs. Browning in her noble 'Song for Ragged Schools'—

'All these mouths we cannot feed,
And we cannot clothe these bodies ;
Well, if man's so hard indeed,
Let them learn, at least, what God is !

'If no better can be done,
Let us do but this,—endeavour
That the Sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they shiver !

'On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social juggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags,
To ennoble the heart's struggle !

Here then we have from one of the ablest of modern Sceptics a practical confession of the failure of Scepticism ; it may do for the scribes and Pharisees of modern culture, but if the street arabs are to be reclaimed, educated, and fitted for the work of life, other and very different kinds of agencies must be employed.

That the Sceptical theory of life fails when considered from the *intellectual* stand-point we have already endeavoured to make manifest. It can give no satisfactory explanation of man's life, and it can offer us no consistent or thinkable philosophy of the universe. Ultimately, all Sceptical theories must

rest on a Materialistic basis, and Materialism is not, as a philosophy, either sufficient or self-consistent. It cannot account for even the intellectual operations of man's nature, not to speak of the moral and spiritual. Its apparent simplicity is only apparent, and not real; even the most distinguished of its advocates are compelled to admit that they can find no passage between the physical and spiritual parts of man's nature. They may, indeed, express in terms that are material processes that are purely mental, but this only conceals difference, and in no case proves identity. We may, if so minded, sneer at the idea of the soul as a substantive *entity*; we may speak of its operations as simply certain functions of organization. These, and all such-like devices, are only clumsy attempts to conceal ignorance,—not in any degree triumphs of Materialism.

How unsatisfactory, from an *intellectual* point of view, the Sceptical view of the Bible and Christianity is, we have already seen. It is easy to say that a miracle is impossible, and that *therefore* all records of the miraculous must be rejected at the very outset; this is a mere assumption, and displays more audacity than either wisdom or scientific accuracy of thought. Here we have a book that occupies a unique position in the literature of the world; here we have the history of a people unlike all other histories,—culminating, too, in the appearance of a wonderful Life, a Life which has through all the ages been the light of the world, whose beams even Sceptics have accepted and welcomed. Scepticism can give no rational account either of the book or the people; least of all can it explain to us the meaning of the Prophet of Nazareth. If theories founded on partial inductions of the facts be trustworthy,—if that be science which is based on imagination and guess-work, rather than on the facts of the case patiently collected and wisely interpreted,—then may the Sceptical theory of life be considered intellectually valid.

In our own time there are events occurring of which Scepticism can give no rational account. In the early part of last century the Deists ridiculed Christianity, and considered it an effete superstition and an utterly spent force; they were hardly

prepared for the great revival under the Wesleys and Whitefield, and neither they nor their successors have given any explanation of the forces that did such splendid spiritual work towards the close of the century. If we measure forces both as to *quantity* and *quality* by their products, and this is the method of science, it is but fair to ask for a Sceptical explanation of the forces at work in Methodism, and in the great outburst of missionary and philanthropic zeal witnessed about the close of last, and the early days of the present, century. The words fanaticism, frenzy, enthusiasm, and the like, are freely used in such connections; truly these are never altogether absent from any great moral movement among men, but the foam on the crest of a wave does not explain the force below the surface of the water.

Again, the Sceptical view of life ignores some of the spiritual forces at work among ourselves. Take the case of Mr. Müller, of Bristol, and this is only one out of many similar ones in different parts of the world; here we have a devoted servant of God, living a most simply and truly apostolic life, trusting to God for his daily bread, refusing, on the one hand, to make any bargain with his fellow-men, on the other, to appeal for aid in support of the charitable institutions he has founded and carried on for nearly half a century. At the present moment he takes charge of over two thousand orphans, requires a large sum each day to meet the necessary expenditure, refuses to either beg money or contract debt, yet the money is forthcoming, and has been forthcoming all these years. How will a Sceptic account for such a phenomenon? Müller believes that the money both for himself and his orphans comes *in answer to prayer*. What is the Sceptical explanation? Some have attempted to explain this on principles accepted by Spiritualists; others, among the rest, Mr. Row, in his Bampton Lecture, by 'ordinary human causes,' without having recourse to any special Divine intervention. Sceptics generally ignore the whole matter, or pass it by with a sneer. For our part, we do not feel satisfied with Mr. Row's theory, which indeed is the one a Sceptic would naturally adopt. Taking the whole case, not only the orphanages, but the whole history of Müller's work,

adding to it the life and work of Mr. Henry Craik, who was for long Mr. Müller's co-pastor and fellow-worker, we think there is more than can be covered by Mr. Row's remarks. Darwin and other Evolutionists say, 'Give us certain germs of life, certain powers, potencies, and conditions, give us also unlimited time, and we will explain, without Divine intervention, the whole of creation.' Truly, but then these germs of life, these potencies, laws, and favouring conditions, have to be explained as well as their *products* ! So in Müller's case, the difficulty seems to be with the *start*. Before 'reports' were sent out, there must be facts to report, and before money was received, there must be influences at work moving the hearts, wills, and pockets of men. There is no need to call these things miraculous. Given only the absolute certainty of New Testament teaching, and all fall within the spiritual order of the universe, as Christ has revealed this unto His disciples. Mr. Müller has received and used his works of love *three quarters of a million* of money; for his own personal wants, on the average, over £800 a year, more than two-thirds of which sum has found its way into the treasury out of which payments are made for orphans. Looking at all the circumstances, taking into account the results in other and similar institutions, the teachings of such men as Müller, Stockmayer, Blumhardt, and others, it does seem to us that Scepticism will here find its most perplexing problem, and faith one of its simplest yet mightiest vindications. Why should Müller's own account be considered incredible? If Christ's word holds good that 'these signs' shall follow faith, that His 'works,' and even 'greater works,' shall be done by His disciples in His name, may we not regard these and other similar 'works' as testimonies to the Gospel, needed in this age of doubt and unbelief, and therefore afforded by Him who sees all and knows what is best? We have referred to Müller's case because it stands out before the world, and, as it were, challenges the attention of Scepticism. It is by no means the only instance of the same kind of faith. Let anyone enter into conversation, say, with Miss Macpherson,¹ or with other devoted

¹ Of the London and Canadian Homes, etc.

and unostentatious Christian workers in various parts of the kingdom, and he will hear things equally as wonderful as those told by Mr. Müller, of Bristol ; things, too, that cannot be explained either by Scepticism, or by the semi-Sceptical theory of things, too frequently held and taught by believers in the Divine origin and authority of Christianity.

This failure of Scepticism becomes even more manifest when we consider its *moral and spiritual impotence*. The Sceptical theory of life never satisfies any really great thinker, never gives true rest to the mind of any who desire the highest possible life for the individual and the race. The contrast between the *sadness* of much that is best in modern literature of the Sceptical order, and the *joyousness* of the Bible we have already dwelt upon. We may go further and point to the manifest dissatisfaction of many leading Sceptics with their own theory of life. Clearly 'rational' Scepticism gave no true happiness to Mr. J. S. Mill. Miss Harriet Martineau, indeed, appeared quite satisfied with herself and with her philosophy of the universe ; at the same time, noble as she was in some respects, we can hardly regard her nature as one of the most sensitive to spiritual influences. One who could be so merciless in her judgments of character could have had but little sense of her own unworthiness.

Pressensé speaks of the 'aching desire and infinite sadness of the human soul at a distance from God.'¹ Scepticism does much to create, but nothing at all to meet and satisfy, this desire. When souls cry out for the 'living God' it can offer them only dead matter and forces that have nothing in them akin to emotion or pity ; it may speak of orderly sequences and dull uniformities, but it has no eye for the disorder and deformity of the spiritual nature, from which man desires to be delivered. Modern literature gives us many illustrations of this aching desire, and of the powerlessness of unbelief to minister to minds so diseased. No one can read without feelings of sorrow the autobiography of Mr. J. S. Mill. He keenly felt the unsatisfactory nature of his early creed, tried hard to

¹ 'Martyrs and Apologists,' p. 480.

meet the wants of his spiritual nature by poetry, music, fellowship with other souls, and by wider ideals of moral life, yet he confesses that to the last the 'void' remained unfilled. Little wonder that to him, under these conditions, life was at best a 'poor thing'; even human affection, carried to the verge of idolatry, was powerless to satisfy the demands of the heart, and it is evident that towards the close of his life he came nearer in *sympathy*, if not in *belief*, to the hopes of the gospel of Christ.

The same thing is seen in Lange's 'History of Materialism.' The historian shrinks from the thought of a society constructed on Materialistic principles, and longs to retain and use some of the simplest of the evangelical hymns. He refuses to be content with the God of some 'advanced' theologians,—a being who 'works no miracles, has no human sympathies, does not trouble himself in detail with the weal or woe of his creatures.' In his view, the 'tragedy of the suffering Son of God . . . has been a more essential constituent of the truly religious life than all other traditions and dogmas;' and he thinks that if such matters be no longer needed in connection with religion, then religion itself may be done without. And Lange is right. We have here perhaps echoes of voices heard in his earlier life, when under the roof of a truly Christian father,¹ he learned the meaning of Christianity; perhaps also the unsophisticated testimony of a human heart to the barrenness of all substitutes for the one and only gospel which reveals the heart of God, and meets the deepest wants of mankind.

Even Strauss, arch-priest of Scepticism and, in his later days, ardent apostle of the extremest type of the Darwinian creed, as he was, makes much the same confession. He attended the worship of the 'Free Communities' in Germany, congregations organised on a thoroughly Sceptical basis, and found their services 'terribly dry and unedifying. I quite thirsted for an allusion to the Biblical legend in the Christian calendar, in order to get at least something *for the heart* and imagination,

¹ F. A. Lange, author of the 'History of Materialism,' is the son of Dr. J. P. Lange, the well-known Bible commentator, author of the 'Life of Christ,' etc.

but the cordial was not forthcoming. No ; this is not the way either. After the edifice of the Church has been demolished, to go and give a homily on the bare, pitifully levelled site, is dismal to a degree that makes one shudder!¹ If Mill, and Strauss, and Lange, feel like this, if they confess the impotency of the new philosophy of life, is there not a strong presumption in favour of our contention that Scepticism is a failure? Nor do these gifted men stand alone in this matter. We have hardly to read between the lines in some passages of the writings of the late Professor Clifford to see that he rejected Christianity with no 'light heart.' Our Sceptical poetry is more like a wail of anguish than a note of triumph, and the outlook of Scepticism is anything but cheering. Men may sneer at the longing of the human heart for immortality,—may point to the myriads of the children of the East whose heaven appears to be much the same as our idea of annihilation. We know all this, but the popular view about the heaven of Buddha is hotly disputed, and may be far from the correct one. Apart altogether from this, take the Western world and our own best ideas of life,—who will say that to die like the beasts of the field is the life sought by the human spirit? Give it the glory of living and of life, not extinction! The heart of man cries out for another terminus to existence, and the instincts of the purest and noblest do count for something in life, *especially when these are confirmed by the teachings of the One who knew best*. It may be that some who have loved and lost, who have suffered much and missed their way, men and women to whom life has been cruel and hard, welcome the idea of eternal sleep ; a truer, yea, a more universal and more childlike thought will be,—

‘Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :
Thou madest man, he knows not why ;
He thinks he was not made to die,
And Thou hast made him : *Thou art just.*’

But beyond all this, to the Sceptical theory of life there is ever the practical objection,—‘*it will not work.*’ It has no

¹ Quoted by Lange, ‘History of Materialism,’ vol. iii.

power to reform the intemperate, to raise the degraded from the mire of their sinful life, to purify the unchaste, and to supply to all the motive-power to a truly noble life. This moral and spiritual impotence of what men proudly call *Free-thought* is the practical difficulty in the way. In a very suggestive chapter, in one of the most instructive books recently published,¹ Miss Ellice Hopkins discusses the question of the 'intellectual gospels' offered as substitutes for the Gospel of Christ. The case she brings forward is a crucial one. Given four or five hundred men belonging to the lower division of the working class, ignorant, debased, and dissolute, living in open and avowed violation of all Divine and many human laws, how are they to be saved? We need not give any specially narrow or distinctively evangelical sense to the word *salvation*. How are they to be 'saved *somehow*—saved in that grossly intelligible sense of the word *salvation* which even Mr. Voysey would accept—saved from sin and degradation?' No Freethinker can object to the fairness of Miss Hopkins' statement of the problem; let him deeply ponder her straightforward answer,—an answer not based on any theorizings of the study, but upon direct contact with the problem itself. Put anyone, as Miss Hopkins found herself, in the midst of such a mass of moral material,—how to lift it up into anything like purity! Is she to tell them, with Matthew Arnold, of a 'stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness'? They were, alas! too familiar with streams of tendency, but 'they made for the public-house and wife-beating!' 'Would it be any good to preach to them the "method of Jesus," the duty of self-abnegation—to these men, who were driven by every wild passion of their natures to self-indulgence—passions that would make short work of any abstract notions, and could only be cast out by some other passion of love and adoration, such as only a living person can inspire?' Was she to speak to these men, in Spencerian language, about the 'Great Inscrutable Power, to which neither personality nor emotion can be assigned, and expect that the knowledge of It would regulate their moral emotions, with

¹ 'Work among Working-Men,' Strahan and Co.

which It was out of all relation'? Or the God of Deism, that easy, good-natured kind of being worshipped by many who shrink from the more consistent and thorough-going schemes of unbelief? Such a being was too far 'removed from them in the altitude of his perfections and blessedness, when the misery and disorder of their lives was a proof either that he did not mind, or, if he did, didn't much care.' 'Alas!' says this noble worker, 'I felt forlornly enough that my intellectual gospels had but one fault when brought into contact with the mass of humanity—they *would not work*. The intellectual few might be saved; but as for this people that knoweth not, on this showing we must say, with the Pharisee of old, "They are cursed."'

This witness is true, and the truth she teaches is not mere metaphysical truth, but truth gained through real experience of the powerlessness of the intellectual gospels to save the people from their sins. Scepticism has no gospel able to save the degraded; no power able to lift the masses into purity and righteousness. Miss Hopkins raises the question as to whether these 'intellectual gospels' have power to save any; this problem we have already touched in former chapters. It demands, and will well repay, a fuller discussion. Is Scepticism able to save even the 'intellectual few'? We believe there is but one possible answer to this question, when we give to the word *salvation* its true and proper meaning. If the Sceptical philosophy cannot remove the aching desire and infinite sadness from the hearts of its noblest apostles, if under its influence they feel life to be but a poor thing at best, and at times welcome the idea of annihilation, can it be said to have saved them? We may be reminded that Scepticism enables the chosen few to live truly honourable and worthy lives, that it makes them consecrate their energies to the good of the race, raises them above the passions and prejudices of ordinary men, and furnishes them with motive-power sufficient for all the ends of life. We acknowledge the existence in unbelievers of much that is morally pure and worthy, but we maintain that Scepticism did not create these virtues. Lange fully, much too

fully for the interests of Scepticism, acknowledges this truth in his 'History of Materialism.' He tells us that the 'moral effects' of Christian ideas are as often *undervalued* as exaggerated; while severely, but not too severely, censuring those 'servants of the Church who sit at the tables of the rich, and preach subjection to the poor,' he yet declares that it is Christianity that has done most for the poor. Even the Communistic theories both of the French Comte and the English Owen have, according to Lange, a Christian origin.¹ Not only moral but even *intellectual* progress he in a great part attributes to the 'quiet but continual operation of Christian ideas.' This being so, we may well pause before admitting that intellectual gospels have power to save even the Scribes and Pharisees of modern culture. So many spiritual forces play upon, and work within, the lives of the very rejecters of Christianity, that it is difficult to say how far they are unconsciously influenced in their ideals and aims by Christian thought. The New Testament includes in its ideal of salvation deliverance from the 'desires of the mind,' as well as from the grosser 'lusts of the flesh,' which heathen moralists were able to condemn though not to remove. An ancient Pharisee could stand and thank God that he was not as other men, especially unlike his publican fellow-worshipper; so modern Pharisees, of the Sceptical school, often boast of their superiority to vice and gross sins, yet they may be, and often are, unmerciful in judgment, and unloving in disposition. Had Miss Martineau been trained in the 'school of Christ,' she would have spoken more lovingly of many of her contemporaries; had Mr. Mill learned at the Cross the secret of life, he would have had far more real sympathy with those who did not belong to his set, and who could not accept the dogmas of his philosophical school. In reply to this, of course, we shall be reminded of the unloving spirit, and lack of generous sympathy in many who accept the Christian Creed, and belong to, perhaps have foremost places in, the Church; we can only reply that such a character is not the outcome of Christianity, and that the New Testam-

¹ See, for proof of this position, Flint's 'Philosophy of History,' vol. i.

ment says: 'If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' And, as a thoughtful writer reminds us, 'God's elect, did we know them, would be found even now *worthy of their name*, and very different from those who only perplex by their inconstencies or plague by their folly. Loving, truthful, and unselfish, broad in their sympathies, candid in their judgments, honourable in their lives, and humble in the estimate they form of themselves; *these*, the true sons and daughters of the Highest, will one day issue from the obscurity in which it pleases God as yet to hide them, and "*they shall walk in white, for they are worthy.*" From deepest poverty and from peasants' huts—with here and there, it may be, one from the palaces of princes; from lonely prisons, and from martyrdoms severer than those of the axe or the stake; cultured or rude of speech; great souls of whom the world knows nothing, will then come forth—"a multitude which no man can number;" and stand confessed God's own nobility, the aristocracy of the skies.'¹ If Sceptics insist on comparing their elect with Christ's, then let such as these be our representatives; and if such a comparison be made, we need not fear; Christ's sign-manual no other can use, and the mark or stamp which He leaves in the nature that yields to His sway, no other moulder can counterfeit.

Another question here emerges into view. In dealing with the relations of the late lamented Prince Consort to some of the deepest truths of the Evangelical Creed, Mr. Gladstone suggests that some natures are exceptional, and that they must not be held to represent with anything like fairness the large mass of men. 'In some cases the disposition to undervalue, or retrench, or even abandon the old Christian belief, may be due to a composition happier than the average in the amount or energy of its tendencies to evil, and a consequent insensibility to the real need both of restraining and of renovating powers for the true work of life.'² We must admit, to some extent, the influence of this 'happier composition,' yet if the essential truth of Christianity be also the essential experience

¹ Henry Dunn. See 'Destiny of the Human Race,' p. 221.

² *Contemporary Review*, June, 1876.

of all spiritual natures, that before man can live a truly spiritual life, before he can love God with his whole heart, and his neighbour as himself, he must be twice born, then we must limit considerably the range of such ideas. And when we come to study mankind in the light of the new ideal supplied by the actual life of Jesus Christ, we feel certain that Scepticism is powerless to supply even the intellectual few with the motive-power necessary. Besides, the fountains of spiritual influence are everywhere in the world of to-day, and many a Sceptic, even when he protests the most against Christianity, is receiving from Jesus Christ all he has of moral inspiration. Mill is not the only 'rational' Sceptic, who guides life to some extent by the new light, while professing to find no safe foundation for historical Christianity. Mr. Gladstone may again help us. 'In the matter of belief,' he says, 'select individuals may subsist on a poor, thin, sodden, and attenuated diet, which would simply starve the multitude.'¹ So it is we believe; many of the 'select few,' held up as illustrations of what Scepticism can do to develop character and ennobled life, are what they are in virtue of the 'poor, thin, sodden, and attenuated diet,' which they are still, it may be unconsciously, receiving at tables where Christianity is supposed to be forbidden. As Dr. Fairbairn, in his 'Chapters on David Friedrich Strauss,' remarks: 'The question, "Are we still Christians?" had been often before him, and his answer to it had been growingly negative. It might almost be thought that there is about as much sense in the question, "Are we still Christians?" as in the question, "Are we still Europeans?" Our civilization, with all it comprehends, has grown up in the soil of Christianity, and the best, the essentially modern and human elements of our culture, *without as within the Church*, are Christian.'² This being so, we must be careful before admitting the power of Scepticism, or Sceptical morals, to save even the intellectual few. Whether the man to be saved be the master of Israel, or the master of modern science, whether he be the Brahmin of culture, or the most degraded outcast in the slums of some

¹ *Contemporary Review*, June, 1876.

² *Ibid.*, July, 1876.

modern city, it will require other than the intellectual gospels taught by the masters of freethought to make him a truly noble, pure-souled, Christ-like man.

But passing from this, and coming back to the problem as presented to us by Miss Hopkins. How are the degraded masses to be saved? Her answer is simple and explicit: 'Only in the Christianity of the Bible could I find what I wanted, could I work out some simple form of it for them and me.' And the results were truly wonderful, and to a Sceptic honest enough to look plainly at them, they must be perplexing. 'Beneath the power of the cross of Christ, I have seen four hundred rough, world-hardened reckless men weeping and sobbing like children over their sins. I have seen, Sunday after Sunday, bad men turned into good by it—men who were drunkards, profligates, blasphemers, fighters, gamblers, turned into good, devout, tender-hearted men. For months I never spoke but this change took place, two or three thus receiving the word of life, and becoming completely changed men. *How can Christianity be anything but a great life-giving fact to me?*

Here we have Christianity put to the test in the most practical way. It must be admitted that the weapons at the command of a Sceptic could never have done the work. Appeals to utility, to enlightened self-interest, to the essential dignity of human nature, and the sin of degrading a thing so noble, would have been vain. These rough, and hardened, men would have been keen-sighted enough to see that a man, as Scepticism must represent him, is in *no sense a very exalted creature*. Take away from him all spiritual attributes and relationships, regard him as only a more highly organised machine, or an animal with subtler and more delicately balanced brain and nervous system; tell him that death ends all for him, but that the race will live after him, and that he ought to make life better for posterity. If he does not love the wife and children who are near him, if he is not faithful to the men and women about him, why should he be *moral* for the sake of *posterity*? Call his pleasures those of a pig instead of those to be sought and enjoyed by a man. He may reply, 'This is a matter of taste;' and, moreover, the man

of pure Materialism differs but little from the pig. The old definitions of man, the nobler attributes to which appeal is made in all such argument, have been swept away, and the physiological mechanism,—the bundle of material attributes left behind, cannot be expected to respond to this touch. In short, the Sceptic has nothing to draw with, and this well of humanity is too deep for him. The Gospel reaches the lowest depths of the human soul ; the love of God revealed in the cross of Christ has power to stir the heart of the most degraded, and hence the splendid results to which Miss Hopkins makes her appeal. Why should Sceptics refuse to accept these simple yet most convincing evidences ? Here we have a force capable of doing the work ; the love of Christ reaches the heart ; the power of Christ working through this love is able to lift up the lowest and most degraded, to lift them into fellowship alike with God and man. Under the influence of this divine love the barren soil becomes fruitful, and the desert blossoms like the rose. Scepticism has no such power, and must utterly and hopelessly fail when it seeks to deal with such moral and spiritual wastes.

In Belgium, even the politicians are beginning to find out the practical weakness of freethought. The Sceptical leaders have no power to cope with the forces inherent in Ultramontaniam. They believed that if only the people had free institutions, they would value them so highly, that no longer would they surrender their lives and interests to priestly hands. Vain dreams ! The Ultramontane had faith in something ; what he believed might not appear to us the most rational theory of life, but then he really believed it, and sought to subject his life to its control. Banished from the Forum, Ultramontaniam took refuge in the elementary schools, and when the Free-thinking Liberals were glorifying free institutions and expecting the millennium, those sleepless workers, the Jesuits, were engaged in training the children. After a generation had passed politicians were astonished to find in the polling-booths a new race of men, ready to vote for what they had considered a dead superstition. And now, we understand, these very politicians, though themselves often

Sceptical, are anxious to encourage the preaching and teaching of earnest evangelical believers. They have learned that Scepticism is no match for Ultramontaniam, and that this foe of human liberty can only be dealt with by men who have a stronger and more spiritual faith. This problem is not unlikely the one with which Sceptics in England must deal. How can they hope to cast out the demons of sensuality, of ignorance, and vice, by means of 'Rational Scepticism'?

When Cromwell was fighting the battles of the Parliament and the country, he met with a similar difficulty. How to meet and successfully contend against the flower of England's aristocracy, with the raw recruits under his command! The Protector with true insight saw that spirit must deal with spirit. He sought out God-fearing men, men who loved their country and who were willing to die for it, who considered its liberties more sacred than their own lives, and who were full of enthusiasm for the cause. These men, after a period of military training and discipline, he found more than able to meet the high-spirited youth on the king's side. He met energy, dash, enterprise, and loyalty, with a higher energy still, with a more spiritual devotion, and a bravery against which no dash was of any avail. And truly said the general in later years, as he looked back with soldier-like pride on his trusted comrades, 'these men were never beaten at all.'

Ours are very different conflicts, but we still need the spirit of Cromwell's Ironsides. Freethinkers, no matter how great their energy, cannot deal with this problem successfully. The gospel of enlightened selfishness will never make men willing to be pure. Science may enable man to *see and know*, but can never give him power to *do* the right. It may tell us about the origin of species and the descent of man, about the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest; the struggle we know well, and the fittest are too often the strongest and most selfish, those who can without scruple rise upon the ruins of the life of their fellows. Industrialism cannot save men; its political economy need not be what Carlyle called a 'dismal science,' but it must necessarily be imperfect. An economy

which ignores some of the higher moral elements in humanity, whose *laws* are the outcome of a partial analysis of man's nature, can never save society. Even Lange seems to look forward with something akin to alarm to the triumph of those very principles, for which he and others vehemently contend.

When there is booty to be divided, the stronger takes for himself the largest share; the weaker must perhaps suffer the grossest injustice,' and this just because he is weakest. 'Whether I wring my fellow-man's neck because I am the stronger, or whether by my superior knowledge of business and law I lay a trap for him and cause him to groan in misery, while I "*lawfully*" appropriate the profit of his labour, makes little difference.' Lange sees in the present state of society all those evils that destroyed the ancient world: 'We have the immoderate growth of riches; we have the proletariat; we have the decay of morals and religion; the present forms of government all have their existence threatened, and the belief in a coming general and mighty revolution is widely spread and deeply rooted.'¹ True, he sees elements in modern civilization that were not in the ancient world; but these are just those Christian ideas and forms of life that Scepticism is struggling now to destroy, and to which men like Lange refuse their true and fitting sphere. No wonder the outlook is gloomy for those whose eyes are open to the existing evils, but who have no faith in the power of the gospel of Christ.

'For might instead of right is hell on earth,
Battle of darkness still against God's side.'

This spirit of hopelessness is not among those who loyally accept the Christian revelation. They see the failure of Scepticism, but they also see the triumph of Christ! Miss Hopkins asks why the Gospel should be anything but a grand *fact* in her experience. Why, indeed? If we see with our own eyes the drunkard made sober, the licentious made chaste, the selfish made self-sacrificing, and the proud made humble; if we see men living and working for the glory of God, and the highest

¹ 'History of Materialism,' vol. iii.

good of their fellows,—consecrating talent, wealth, social influence, political power to the service of man, under the influence of the constraining love of Christ, why should we doubt the efficacy of Christ's gospel, or despair of its ultimate triumph?

Facts like these, and, thank God, in our time they are neither few nor strange, cannot be set aside by cavils about the earlier histories of the Bible, or by difficulties in connection with the interpretation of the prophetic works.

These practical evidences, neglected by believers and unbelievers alike, demand the attention of all truth-seekers. We do not for a moment assert that Christianity has solved every problem that may be raised, or that has been raised, in connection with man's intellectual and spiritual life. Science, in these days, is teaching us more and more to distrust systems that pretend to solve all human enigmas, and to look for practical guidance rather than speculative satisfaction. And Christianity has *practically* solved man's deepest problems in life. It has revealed God, and its revelation meets the cravings of the heart, as well as the demands of the intellect; it has opened up for the feeblest, and for the most simple, a path by which purity, peace, and moral virtue can be attained; it gives motive-power sufficient to overcome the natural inertia, so to speak, in human life, and to lead man to *do* as well as *know* and *desire* the highest things; it fills his mind with trust, and hope, and love, and leads him to expect in a future life light, upon dark questions, now either denied or useless to him under present conditions; above all, in the person of Jesus Christ it holds up before him an *ideal* of supreme excellence, and in the quickening energy of the *Holy Spirit* it affords him all needed power to live a noble and Christ-like life. Scepticism may appeal to strong natures, and imagine that it supplies them with *motive-power*. Christianity lays hold of the weak and the sinful, and lifts them up to purity, piety, and strength of purpose.

Mrs. Browning reminds us that it takes a 'soul to move a body;' the great failure of Scepticism lies in this, that it has no 'great hopes for great souls,' or, to put it more correctly, no

great hopes, inspirations, and ideals, by which humble souls may be made truly great.

' We must be here to work ;

And men who work can only work for men,
And, not to work in vain, must comprehend
Humanity, and so work humanly,
And raise men's bodies still by raising souls,
As God did first.

" But stand upon the earth,"

I said, " to raise them " (this is human, too,
There's nothing high which has not first been low.
My humbleness, said One, has made me great !)
As God did last."

" And work all silently

And simply," he returned, " as God does all ;
Distort our nature never for our work,
Nor count our right hands stronger for being hoofs.
The man most man, with tenderest human hands,
Works best for men,—as God in Nazareth."
He paused upon the word, and then resumed ;
" Fewer programmes, we who have no prescience,
Fewer systems, we who are held and do not hold,
Less mapping out of masses to be saved,
By nations or by sexes. Fourier's void,
And Comte absurd,—and Cabet, puerile.
Subsist no rules of life outside of life,
No perfect manners, without Christian souls :
The Christ Himself had been no Lawgiver
Unless He had given the life, too, with the Law." '

¹ Mrs. Browning, 'Aurora Leigh,' p. 399.

THE END.









